# HONOR BRIGHT'S NEW ADVENTURE



BY LAURA · E · RICHARDS



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# HONOR BRIGHT'S NEW ADVENTURE

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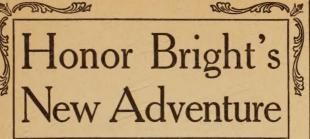
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"'THEY SENT ME TO SHOW YOU THE WAY.'"
(See page 147)



BY

## LAURA E. RICHARDS

Author of

"Honor Bright," "The Hildegarde-Margaret Series,"
"Captain January," "Five Minute Stories," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
ELIZABETH R. WITHINGTON



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## To MY LANDLORD

AND THE OTHER KIND FRIENDS
WHO WELCOMED ME AND MINE TO THE
EARTHLY PARADISE



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# HONOR BRIGHT'S NEW ADVENTURE

### CHAPTER I

#### LONDON

Honor Bright stood at the window and looked out upon London. A strange London it seemed to her fifteen-year-old eyes (not yet quite fifteen, she would remind me; Honor is accurate in such matters); not at all what she had expected. Fresh from her Swiss pension school, she had expected a roaring whirlpool which should blind, deafen, perhaps finally engulf and overwhelm her. She had expected to stay in a hotel all white marble and gold, with crimson carpets and shining mirrors, and a lift that shot arrow-like up and down all day; with hosts of glittering footmen and flocks of white-capped maids.

In one of its gilded rooms she, Honor, would sit at an escritoire of ormolu and write to her friends at *Pension Madeleine*, Stephanie and Patricia, and dear, dear Sœur Séraphine, telling them of the splendor by which she was surrounded; assuring them that no matter in what magnificence she lived, her heart remained with them, would never, never leave them.

Instead of all this, here was a quiet house in a quiet crescent, looking out across a street onto a green garden: a pleasant room with a soft-coal fire in the grate; comfortable, oldfashioned chairs and sofas; a Brussels carpet with wreaths of roses on it. It might beanywhere! thought Honor. It might be in Vevay, or—or New York? But no! not that. New York must roar and shine and whirl.

"Mustn't it, Miss Folly?" she asked, turning, as a lady entered the room, a young, pleasant-faced woman quietly dressed in dark blue

"Mustn't what, Honor? And what mustn't?"

Honor turned from the window with a little sigh.

"Mustn't New York be all loud and shining? I thought London would be so, but no! All quiet, all triste; I think myself—no, not in dear Vevay, but in some old asleep place."

"'Sleepy', not 'asleep'!" said Miss Folly. Honor was alert in an instant.

"How then? When I sleep, I am asleep, not so?"

Miss Folly explained patiently. Honor shook her head impatiently.

"Oh, adjective, adverb, predicate—tiresome things! If I had been born French, what trouble saved!"

Miss Folly took the poker and broke open a lump of coal in the grate. The clean, shining facets fell apart; a thick ringlet of yellow smoke curled between, a flicker of flame followed. "See!" said Miss Folly, "And smell!" she added. "However long you live, however far you go, that smell will say, 'London' to you whenever you meet it. And—shine and roar? There is not very much shining, it is true; but you'll have all the roaring you want, child, and more too, when we get to our sightseeing. Meantime be thankful for a little quiet and a cup of tea. Here comes Hetty with the tray."

Honor took heart a little. Hetty did not glitter, but she was white-capped, and neat, and rosy, and altogether pleasant to look at. The tea-things did glitter, and they clinked agreeably, and there was a hot tea-cake, and strawberry jam, and—altogether, when Mrs. Damian entered the room on the stroke of five, Honor was able to show her a cheerful countenance, which—Miss Folly privately thought—was just as well.

Mrs. Damian was probably about a thousand years old: Honor did not say this to

herself in so many words, but she felt it. As a matter of fact, the lady's years were seventy, and she carried them like a banner. Slender. erect, distinguished from cap to foot, as Sœur Séraphine put it, Mrs. Damian was what she always had been, a beauty and a great lady. She had spent much of her life in travel both with her husband, a distinguished scientist, and—after his death—alone or with a companion; had come by merest chance upon Honor Bright, the orphan child of a muchloved cousin, in the park at Vevay a few months before this story opens; had recognized, befriended, finally adopted her. Now they were—as Honor supposed—on their way to New York, where Mrs. Damian expected to lay aside her pilgrim staff and rest after her long wandering. Miss Martha Folly, her companion for the past five years, never allowed herself to suppose anything until it had happened.

"Well, children!" Mrs. Damian settled her

satin draperies (she wore satin by day, velvet by night) in the chair that Miss Folly drew up near the fire for her. "Folly, the tray was brought in two minutes before the time. See to it, will you? Give the child her tea first, while it is weak. Milk and water with a wink -no more than a wink of the teapot! Well, Honor! So you find London dull?"

Honor started and faltered.

"My aunt! I? Have I said—but surely not!"

"Surely not!" Mrs. Damian nodded amicably, as she took a macaroon. "Surely not! but at luncheon you sighed at the soup and mourned at the méringue. Cheer up! I thought a day's rest would be good for you after that diabolical passage, and I had other things for Folly to do. But to-morrow, we'll see! We have six days. Three sights a day: she is young, Folly; she can stand three. A long one in the morning, two short ones in the afternoon. Three hours' rest at noon. Decidedly. Bring me pencil and paper and Murray. So!"

Honor's eyes-very pretty dark blue eyes they were, with long lashes above and below had a way of growing large and round, when she was surprised; Mrs. Damian was constantly warning her not to let them drop out. They were very large and very round now, as she listened to the programme her guardian was laying out for her. The British Museum three mornings. Of course she ought to go there every morning, but-the Abbey one, the Tower one, the Zoo one. Decidedly. For the afternoons, Hampton Court—staying over tea, of course—St. Paul's, and Westminster; the Temple; the Park; South Kensington. There! that is settled. Don't tell me I have left out any essential, Folly, for I will not endure it. Well! out with it!"

"Only the National Gallery!" said Miss Folly demurely.

"It is a thousand pities—" Mrs. Damian

spoke deliberately— "that a judicious selection of expletives is not included in the education of a young woman. My training forbids me even to throw the fire-irons at you, as you richly deserve. Let me see! we must give up the Park. After all, a park is a park."

"The park in Vevay is so beautiful!" murmured Honor, with a sigh. "No other park can be so beautiful."

"Oh, indeed!" Mrs. Damian spoke with asperity. "Folly, we will drive through the Park on our way to Kensington. And, Honor, you are not to say 'beauti-fool', do you hear? Beauty is one thing, a fool is another. They are often combined in fact, but not in speech. Do not let your eyes drop out! You are distinctly better-looking with them. Hand me the Murray again!"

Through all her life, Honor Bright was to look back at that week in London as the most amazing of her experiences. Her horizon had hitherto been bounded by the Swiss Alps: a

glorious horizon, on which new peaks, new beauties, new worlds seemed opening every day to the romantic, sensitive girl. The sudden cramping and lowering of her outlook to dull, foggy skies, dull, smoky houses, chimney-pots, and iron railings, filled her at first with despair. The first night, her pillow was actually wet with tears, a thing she had frequently imagined, but seldom, if ever, experienced; usually, she was asleep before she had time to weep. Now, however, she had sat up till a fearfully late hour, ten o'clockwhat would Madame Madeleine say?-writing, and had thoroughly banished sleep. She wrote in a thick, square blank book bound in brown leather; it contained the Story of her Life; with variations, be it said.

"Here I took leave of childhood. The happy girl, care-free and joyous, was no more; only a pale rathe raith wraith (sic; Honor was shaky in her English spelling) remained, who looked out with mournful eyes

on a desolate world. Joy was dead; but Duty remained, and for Duty I determined to live. People may ask, 'Who is this, so young and yet so sad? Why has sorrow set her withering seal upon that brow once so bright? Has she lost all who are dear to her?' "

"Oh dear! oh dear!" cried Honor. "I have lost them: I shall never, never see them again. I want to go home! oh dear! oh dear!" and the poor child cried herself to sleep.

The next day began a new life. The skies were still dull, the houses still smoky; but behind those forbidding walls—oh, wonder! oh, miracle! new horizons, lifting high and higher; new vistas stretching into unimagined distances; new worlds, hitherto undreamed of.

"Well!"

Mrs. Damian looked up from her knitting, as Honor came in, a very different Honor from the pale, heavy-eyed, melancholy maiden who had gone out with Miss Folly three hours earlier. This Honor came walking on air;

her eyes shining, her cheeks glowing, her whole little person radiating delight.

"Well!" repeated Mrs. Damian in a satisfied tone. "So the Museum was pas mal, eh?"

"Oh, Aunt Damian! oh! the wonder, the glory! never did I dream, never of my life, that such things existed. I am—how do you say? transported! I am combled, veritably combled!"

She sank breathless on a chair; Mrs. Damian regarded her benevolently.

"I suppose, Folly," she said, "she ought not to say 'combled' any more. It's an excellent word, much more expressive than 'overwhelmed'; but—you'd better say 'overwhelmed', child; 'comblé', when you are speaking French, but not in English. You took in the Egyptian rooms this morning?"

"Yes! oh! you have been there, my aunt?"

"I suppose," said Mrs. Damian thought-

fully, "that in the course of my life I must have spent several years in the Museum. My Professor (it was thus she always spoke of her husband) mostly lived there, whenever we were in London. I had to go and bring him away for his meals, almost by force. Yes; dear me! the Egyptian rooms were specially fatal. Not only did I have to do everything short of putting up a cot for him there (which would not have been allowed) but after every bout of Museum-Egypt he would declare that he must see the real thing once more before he died-he had no idea of dying-and off I was whisked to Luxor or Assouan."

"You have—you have been in Egypt, Aunt Damian? Oh! Oh!"

"Six times; or is it seven? We went for the winter, you understand. My Professor always left London on the first of November, for fear of committing suicide. The fog annoyed him. Yes! dear me! We took a dahabeah: a Nile boat, child, with a great sail; I'll show you some photographs. Yes! it was a pleasant life, only I always grew stout."

Miss Folly smiled.

"I cannot imagine you stout, Mrs. Damian."

"My dear! after an Egyptian winter, I always had to order a complete set of new clothes. Nothing fitted me except my parasol. That reminds me! Folly, take the child to Blankley's after luncheon, will you, and get her some thin clothes. Not muslin, that is too thin: batiste, dimity, that kind of thing; and a white China silk for evening. What is the matter, child? Your eyes will drop out, and then where would you be?"

"My aunt! pardon! but is New York warm in winter?"

"Warm? Why should it be warm? New York is never warm except when you want it cool."

"Then—thin clothes? Why——"

Mrs. Damian looked at Miss Folly.

"She must lie down for half an hour before

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lunch!" she said briefly. "Flat repose; you, too, Folly. I am going to take a nap here." She closed her eyes, and Miss Folly led the bewildered Honor away.

## CHAPTER II

#### ART

Vevay is a charming place, but it contains few pictures of note. Honor's first introduction to the world of Art was in her visit to the National Gallery, the day after that to the British Museum. At first she was stricken dumb; could only gaze and gaze, speechless, as kind Miss Folly, catalogue in hand, led her from room to room, from masterpiece to masterpiece. She had not known, she had not dreamed, that such things existed in the world. They had had drawing lessons at Pension Madeleine; she had herself drawn an acanthus leaf which M. Brunet, the kind old drawingmaster, had called "pas mal." It was even whispered that he had pronounced Vivette to have a great talent. But who could have believed that the world contained things like these?

"And these are all of one country, you tell me? All of Italie? *Impossible*, Miss Follydear!"

Martha Folly nodded in her quiet, assured way.

"All of Italy, Honor! It would be foolish to attempt more, in one visit. We may probably be able to squeeze in another; we'll try for it, anyhow. Now, I am going to sit down for a few minutes. Do you roam about the room, and find the picture you like best, and we will study it a bit, so that you can tell Mrs. Damian about it. She likes to hear what has specially impressed or interested you."

She sat down on a bench opposite a great golden canvas crowded with saints and angels; and Honor, nothing loath, wandered away, sighing with wonder and delight. Very slowly she moved, stopping every other moment to become absorbed in this or that wonder. She

murmured, in French, little scraps of talk, addressed sometimes to the world in general, sometimes to her friends. Ah! par exemple! could Zitli, her boy friend, the Swiss woodcarver, could he but see this picture, with the frame so cunningly carved in gilded fruits! but he would merely glance at the frame; the great, strong-winged angel was what he would look at; it was as his brother Atli might be, if he were an angel instead of a mountaineer.

"Ah! Zitli, my friend, could you but know, could you but see these wonders! if my aunt would but adopt Zitli to be my brother, what joy!"

Several visitors in the Gallery that day turned from the masterpieces of Art to look at Honor, thinking perhaps that here was a pretty little piece of Nature's handiwork. As she stood lightly poised, her head thrown back, her lips slightly parted, gazing with all her soul in her eyes—

"By George!" muttered one young man, seated before an easel, "there's my St. Barbara, if you like!"

He whipped out a notebook, and began, with swift, sidelong glances, to sketch the girl's figure and upturned face. Seeing this, Miss Folly rose, and moved quietly to Honor's side. She was amazed to find the child's eyes full of tears; as she spoke, they brimmed over and rolled slowly down her rosy cheeks, to the manifest discomposure of the young artist, who shut up his notebook with a sheepish air, and returned to his copying.

"What is the matter, Honor dear? What troubles you?" said kind Miss Folly.

Honor turned a piteous look at her. "Do you not see?" she asked, motioning toward the picture before her. "Do you not recognize, Miss Folly-dear?"

Miss Folly looked at the picture. It was one she had always loved, the "Nativity" of Piero della Francesca. There is perhaps



THE WHIPPER BUT A NOTE-BOOK, AND BEGAN TO SKETCH."



nothing more lovely in Italian art. The baby Jesus lies on a cloth spread on the ground, his little arms outstretched toward his mother, who kneels in adoration before him. Beside him stands a lovely group of girl-angels, playing on lutes and singing; in the background the three Magi hold converse together. It seems to be a garden bed where the baby is lying, with blossoming plants and little birds hopping or flying about.

"What troubles you, Honor dear?" repeated Miss Folly, laying her hand affectionately on the girl's arm. "Is this your choice? It is lovely indeed; one of Mrs. Damian's favorites, and mine too."

"Miss Folly-dear!" whispered Honor. "You do not see? you do not recognize? But, you saw her four times only, and then in her veil, out of doors. The Holy Virgin—it is Sœur Séraphine who kneels there! her very self, it is I who tell it you. Her front—forehead, do you say? so calm, so pure; her

eyelids like white roseleaves; her mouth—finally, her entire self. It springs to the eye; how can I but weep, to see that beloved friend, and know her so far away? Tell me then, Miss Folly-dear!" Honor drew out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes with a piteous little sniff,—"could he—did he know our dear Sister, this painter of Italy? He made from her the picture, yes?"

"I doubt it!" said Miss Folly dryly. "He—his name was Piero della Francesca, by the way—has been dead four hundred years and more. Let me see! Henry VIII was King of England then, and America was just being discovered. So you see, my dear, this could hardly have been painted from the life."

She spoke lightly, giving Honor time to recover herself.

"I do see," she added, in a different tone, examining the picture more closely, "a look of your lovely lady. Yes, I quite see it, Honor: how pleased her good sister, Madame Madeleine, would be! and so would all the girls. We must see if we can find a photograph of the picture to send them; and another for you to keep for yourself, my dear!" she added kindly, as Honor's face flushed with sudden delight.

"Miss Folly-dear, you are too kind," cried the girl, clasping her hands. "It is that—I should be combled with happiness! how then? Over-whellumed! fi donc! the uggerly word! but, how to express my joy, my r-r-rapture?"

"Suppose we wait till we get the photograph!" suggested Miss Folly. "And now we must go, my dear. We are going to the Museum again, you know. Say good-by to these lovely creatures; the angels are charming, too, aren't they? Do they look like any of your schoolmates, by any chance?"

Honor was in new raptures at the idea. There was no such amazing, no such speaking likeness, she declared, as that of the Madonna to Sœur Séraphine—but—tiens! the one nearest the Holy Lady, with the beautiful dark hair—Were her hair fair, she might be like Patricia, but really like. She held herself like Patricia, so proudly. Ah! Patricia!

She fell into dreams of school life: dreamed her way out of the Gallery and through the streets, seeing nothing of their seething life; woke fully only when a door closed behind her and she found herself once more in the quiet world of the British Museum. They were to see the Greek and Roman rooms today, Miss Folly declared; that had been Mrs. Damian's dictum. Honor's brow clouded for an instant; she wanted more Egypt. But as the wide, clear spaces opened before her, set with "a hundred shapes of lucid stone," beauty in every variety of its most perfect interpretation, she could only clasp her hands again and utter her little wordless cries of rapture. Honor was a very pleasant person to take sightseeing, Miss Folly privately reflected.

It was delightful to see such intense enjoyment, and-yes-such a natural sense of beauty. The child went straight to the best things. The Three Fates, those majestic figures which seem to hold all the spirit of Greek Art in their gracious lines and curves. held her spellbound. She glanced at her companion with a little eloquent gesture, but said no word. Speech did not gain those serene heights. Before the Demeter of Cnidos she began to murmur again; no less lovely, it was less terrifying in its sublimity. Almost, she thought, it had a little look of Madame Madeleine, not? So kind, so calm! Not? Miss Folly, recalling Madame Madeleine's round, rosy face, sharp nose and robin-like black eyes, thought distinctly not. Honor acknowledged that the likeness was not striking. It was only that when one loved, one looked for that—a likeness of the dear ones wherever one went. Was it not so?

It was not beside the Fates, nor yet near

the gracious lady Demeter, that Adventure waited for Honor that day.

They had said good-by to the great sculptures, and were passing through a hall containing splendid sarcophagi of marble, porphyry, alabaster. Honor thought they were bathtubs, and wished they might be filled with crystal water. (She considered milk for an instant; in the old ballads the ladies were so often bathed in milk before being clad in silk; but rejected it as sticky). What delight to plunge, to float, in this one, for example, of cool jade-green marble! Ah! or that other, of translucent alabaster! If she were a queen, thought Honor, if she were the Queen of England, for example, in nothing would she bathe but in one of these. It should stand in her chambre de toilette, walled and floored with marble, white with the faintest rosy tinge, as in that exquisite vase in another room. She would come, in her robe of rose-colored velvet lined with ermine, with slippers to match. Her robe de nuit—Honor paused a moment to consider whether that garment should be of silk, or of cobweb linen trimmed with rich lace. At that instant a sound fell upon her ear, breaking the silence of the great room; a pitiful whimper, as of a child or a lost puppy. Honor started, and clutched her companion's arm. "Miss Folly! do you hear? What is it? Listen, then!"

Miss Folly listened. "It's in trouble, whatever it is!" she said. "The question is, where is it?"

They looked round the hall. No sign of living creature met their eyes, but not far from them the sound broke out again, accompanied this time by a sniff so palpably human that both at once exclaimed, "A child!"

"Where are you?" cried Honor. "Oh, where are you, darling? Show me where you are!"

A sound was heard as of scuffling and scratching. Then a despairing voice, "I

cayn't! I cayn't git up!" Honor ran toward the sound, closely followed by Miss Folly. It came from a tall porphyry sarcophagus, standing on four richly carved feet. They peeped over the side, and met the terrified gaze of—a boy! A small boy, poorly but neatly dressed, crouching against the polished side of the great coffer.

"I cayn't git out!" he said again, his voice dropping to an agonized whisper. "Don't tell the cops on me, lidy! they'll put me in jyle. I'd git out if I could, but I cayn't!"

His voice broke into a sob.

"Poor darling!" cried Honor. "Don't cry, love! we will get you out."

"How on earth did you get in?" asked practical Miss Folly. "How came you here at all?"

The sniffs redoubled.

"I came with Teacher and some of the chaps. I'm at—" he named a well-known Home for Boys. "A chap darsted me to git

in, and I got in, and then they went—

Here the little fellow broke down entirely, and sobbed bitterly. As Honor was trying to console him, and offering chocolate from her bonbonniere, an official entered, and advanced toward them with portentous looks.

"No loud talking, if you please!" he said. "Getting on for closing time, lady!" addressing Miss Folly. "Any trouble here?" his practised eye noting their disturbed countenances.

"Oh, Monsieur!" cried Honor, clasping her hands. "He is not to blame, it is not his fault, poor little one. You will not take him to prison?"

The official cast a benevolent glance on her, and turned to Miss Folly.

"A child!" she said. "In here!" she indicated the sarcophagus, and gave the facts succinctly. The man stepped to the sarcophagus and looked in; whistled; extended a long

arm and grasped the boy's collar. A powerful jerk, a lift, then a clatter of boots as he set the victim down, none too lightly.

"Now!" he said. "What do you mean by it? Hey?"

The boy meant nothing, it appeared. A chap darsted him to git in, and he got.

"How could you?" asked Honor. "Observe but the height, the—the polishiness of it! a creature so small!"

Again the official cocked a kindly eye at her (he had a daughter about her age), and indicated certain carvings which adorned the ends of the magnificent tub. They might, and evidently had, lent foothold, he opined, to a little rip that didn't know how to behave.

He turned a stern gaze on the boy. "And what do you expect me to do with you?" he asked. The child fixed terrified eyes on him, but said nothing.

"Give you to the cop is what I'd ought to do!" the man went on. "You'd ought to be

locked up, playing monkey shines with national prop'ty. You hear that?"

Here Honor broke in, ardent, irrepressible. "Monsieur, you will not do that!" she cried. "This little poor creature! impossible! You are too good, too kind; you have a heart, I see it in your face. Listen! I-we-take him; we charge ourselves of him, is it not so, Miss Folly-dear? My guardian, Madame Damian, is a great lady, r-r-rich, kind, a heart of gold. She will receive this poor lamb, she will feed, clothe, provide for him. Perhaps —oh! perhaps she might adopt him, to be my little brother. What joy! would you like to be my brother, little one? Hein? Another bonbon! you must be starved!"

"Quiet, Honor, quiet!" Miss Folly's hand was on her shoulder, restraining. "I hope you will let the child go!" she said quietly. "He says he comes from St. Elmo's Home. I will gladly take him there, if you will give him into my charge."

The attendant scratched a thoughtful head. "It's my dooty I'm thinking of, lady!" he said. "National prop'ty, you see! and—" he peered over the edge of the sarcophagus.

"Just what I expected. He's muddied it inside with his boots, scrattling round. Stand still, you!" to the boy, whose collar he still held, and who now gave a sudden twist as if trying to escape. "You behave, or you'll find yourself behind the bars in half a quarter of a jiffy. Now what? Here's the cop himself!"

A burly policeman entered, holding firmly by the arm a small man clad in a singular garment, half cassock, half overcoat; a mild, nervous-looking man, who blinked agitatedly behind large round spectacles.

"Hi, Jones!" the policeman addressed the attendant with an air of relief. "Seen anything of a lost kid? I found this chap nosing round where he'd no business to be; says he's looking for a kid—hullo!"

This time the boy's duck and twist were successful. Freeing himself from the detaining hand, he darted to the little man and clutched him. "Here I am!" and "Here he is!" cried the two in one breath. Clinging together, they faced the spectators with desperate courage.

"I am from St. Elmo's Home!" cried the man. "I brought a class here some hours ago. I am near-sighted, and did not realize till I reached home that little Barnaby—stand still, Barnaby! don't tremble, child; all will yet be well—was not with us. I greatly regret, the Superior will greatly regret, any trouble that has been caused. We may now, I trust, depart?"

He blinked inquiringly at the two officials, who looked first at him and then at each other.

"He was nosing about!" said the policeman doggedly, "in places where he hadn't no business. I expect I'd ought to hold him——"

"The kid has got this specimen muddy inside!" said the attendant. "It's my dooty——"

Honor, with a sudden inspiration, pulled out her purse, in which were two bright new half-crowns, Mrs. Damian's gift that morning, "to buy *chiffons* with."

"Let me!" she cried eagerly, holding out the coins; "Monsieur, I implore you, let me give you these! for to clean the muddiness," she lifted liquid eyes to the attendant, "and"—turning them on the policeman, "to—to—what is necessary for the nosing-round, not so? I know not what is nosing-round; is it enough?"

"Don't be absurd, Honor!" said Miss Folly crisply. "Leave this to me, please!"

She made a gesture, and the two officials, who seemed quite put about by Honor's offer, stepped aside with her. There was a confidential murmur; heads were first shaken, then nodded; Miss Folly seemed to shake

hands, lingeringly, with both; after which their hands went to their pockets, and they looked sheepishly at each other.

"That is all right, then?" Thus Miss Folly, still crisp, but cheerful and confident.

"All right, Miss!" said both officials. They smiled admiring embarrassment on Honor, who stood bewildered; then turned with sudden ferocity on the other pair, who were still clinging and cowering together.

"Now suppose you 'op it!" said the policeman. "'Op it out o' here, the sooner the quicker."

"And next time," added the attendant, "bring a telescope with you, seeing your spectacles are no use except to make you handsomer than nature. Quit!"

And with a few incoherent words of thanks, the two inmates of St. Elmo's fled.

## CHAPTER III

## NATURE

"I have two tickets for the chamber concert this afternoon," said Mrs. Damian. "I shall take you, Folly. Honor is tired, or if she isn't she ought to be. A quiet time with a book will do her good."

Miss Folly glanced at Honor, who looked anything but tired, hesitated, then said that she would be very glad to go.

"We shall be back to tea, Honor!" Mrs. Damian continued. "If you want anything, ring for Hetty! What is your book? 'La Neuvaine de Colette'? Very pretty! but you have an English book too?"

"Yes, my aunt. Voilà! it is Henri Esmond, by Thack-away."

"Thackeray!" Mrs. Damian corrected. "And how do you like Henry?"

"I find him all that there is of most difficile, my aunt, but interesting, yes, when one has—how do you say?—overclimbed his difficility."

"'Difficulty' is the English word, and 'surmounted' is more usual than overclimbed. Well! Henry is worth a pretty stiff climb. My dear! I was madly in love with him, at your age. Yes! I used to wish I were Beatrix; I went so far as to get a pair of scarlet silk stockings, with silver clocks. Dear me, yes! stuff and nonsense! Good-by, child! 'be good, sweet child, and let who will be clever'! I don't suppose you know—you do know who wrote that? Bravo! I was clever, but not good. Come, Folly!"

Left alone, Honor sighed, threw a caged glance round the pleasant room, murmuring "pauvre oiseau emprisonné!" then curled herself up comfortably in the big armchair, and

returned to "Colette." She *must* finish this chapter; after that, she would resolutely attack the difficilities—difficulties—of "Esmond."

Faithful to her resolve, after ten happy minutes "Colette" was laid aside, and she took up the big green and gold volume with the quaint pictures. Tiens! the chevelure of the gentlemen was monstrous indeed; all that there was of most Louis Quatorze; but the ladies' costumes were tres bien, tres gentille. And Beatrix was beautiful, yes, truly. And—ah! and dark! happy heroine!

"She was a brown beauty," read Honor, "that is, her eyes, hair, and eyebrows and eyelashes were dark; her hair curling with rich undulations, and waving over her shoulders."

Ah! beautifool! beautifool!

A few pages, and Honor's own eyelashes (which were also dark; it was one of her few comforts in life, she had once confided to her friend Stephanie) began to droop, her bright head to sink lower over the book. She roused herself once or twice, struggled through a stately speech of Col. Esmond——

"My faith! these words of half a yard; how to utter them?"—then gave up, and in another moment was sound asleep.

She was waked by a sound at the window: a slight, persistent sound, as of something scratching at the woodwork. She looked up, then started to her feet in terror. A face was looking in at her, a tiny, brown, wrinkled face; a tiny hand was outstretched, a thin, shrill voice chattered unintelligible gibberish. What was this? Half-awake and all terrified. Honor flew to the door, to call Hetty; but paused, her hand on the knob, to look back at the strange figure. Suddenly she came fully awake, and began to laugh. A monkey! it was only a monkey. Poor little animal! droll indeed that she should be frightened by one of the poor relations, as Patricia Desmond called them.

She went to the window, and met the mournful, appealing gaze of two dark, liquid eyes. It wanted to come in! it was cold, poor creature; suffering, perhaps. Ah! at least she could warm it. As she opened the window, the monkey shrank back, but on her gesture of invitation it leaped down into the room, and pulling off the red cap it wore, made a series of little propitiating bows. Honor was enchanted.

"But," she cried, "he is like M. Jolicœur, in 'Sans Famille.' T'appelles-tu Jolicœur, mon pauvre?"

The monkey laid his hand on his heart, and bowed again.

"You speak—you understand French? Ah! par exemple!" Honor burst into a torrent of French, pouring out her heart to this receptive, this sympathetic creature, whose mournful eyes seemed to hold all the sorrows of the world; certainly quite as much as Honor's world contained. She told him

about Vevay—dear Vevay! about the girls, her friends, her sisters, and how they used to walk in the Park—ah! the charming Park! and how there was a cage there, a great cage— "grand comme ca!"—filled with—with creatures of his kind. How then? Possibly he had come from there himself? "Vevay!" she said the beloved word over and over, looking anxiously at the monkey, who scratched his ear and bowed, but showed no special emotion. Perhaps he did not understand French, after all. Honor coaxed him by degrees to the fire, and he stood warming his little brown hands, and looking about him with quick, darting glances.

He was dressed in a scarlet coat and trousers, neatly made. The cap which he held in his hand was bound with gold braid; he looked trim and well cared for, and yet he was so sorrowful!

Honor drew a hassock up before the fire, and persuaded him to sit upon it. Then she brought biscuits and chocolate, which he grasped eagerly, and ate daintily, holding them in his little skinny hands and nibbling first at one, then the other. His gaze became a shade less mournful, Honor fancied. Ah! how sweet to cheer, to make happy this innocent creature! if only her aunt would let her keep him. Ah! that would be joy indeed! And who knew from what she might be rescuing him? Perhaps a brutal Padrone, who beat the poor angel—chut! Sœur Séraphine forbade calling animals angels; it was to disturb the order of the Divine Arrangement, she said. Darling, then! anything alive might be a darling—except Horrors like spiders and rats!

It was true that Jolicœur did not look as if he had been ill-treated; regard then his fur, that it was smooth and sleek; but that might mean nothing. A brutalist (Honor's own word, coined on the instant) might well take care that no outward sign of his cruelty ap-

peared. There was a woman in Vevay—Stephanie had seen her—who pinched—but pinched! the tail of her innocent cat till it screamed aloud. Enfin! from such agonies she might rescue the dear creature! Surely her aunt would be willing, would be glad!

She had already established M. Jolicœur, as she called him, in a large, gilded cage, taught him dancing and various other accomplishments, and made him the confidant of her heart, when the door opened, and Hetty, the maid, entered with a scuttleful of coals, followed by Fido, the lodging-house spaniel. At sight of M. Jolicœur Hetty screamed, and all but dropped her scuttle.

"For goodness gracious sake, Miss Honor!" she cried. "Whatever have you got there?"

Honor hastened to explain. It was a monkey, a tame, a very intelligent monkey. They were our cousins, didn't Hetty know? He was cold, and she had brought him in to warm him. Let Hetty but observe his eyes, so beautiful, so sorrowful!

Hetty, being wholly unromantic, pronounced the monkey a nasty beast, and was quite sure that Mrs. Damian would not be pleased, and that Mrs. Comfit, the owner of the house, would never allow such a creature in it. At this point Fido, who had his own views about monkeys, took matters into his own paws, and advanced, barking furiously. The monkey, terrified, leaped from the hassock to a chair, from the chair to a stand on which stood a vase of flowers. Over went the stand: crash! went the vase. The water flowed over the carpet. Hetty screamed, Fido barked, M. Joliceur, now beside himself with terror, leaped hither and thither, scattering books, bibelots, and what not. At this moment the door opened again, and Mrs. Damian entered with Miss Folly.

"Ah!" wrote Honor in her journal that

night. "Child of misfortune that I am indeed! Thou saidst well, my Patricia!"

(Patricia Desmond, the beauty of *Pension Madeleine*, loved to poke fun at Honor, of whom she was none the less extremely fond. When Honor went into her heroics [as the girls called them] or was plunged in gulfs of despair, which happened at least once a month, Patricia would sing a song at her, an English song, beginning:

"Has sorrow thy young days shaded?" and ending with:

"Then child of misfortune, come hither!
I'll weep with thee, tear for tear!")

"Child of misfortune, indeed! Destruction attends my path. Six objects of art broken; the carpet stained; the so-beautifully bound volume injured—and all for what? A movement of kindness, an élan of tenderness toward a humble creature whom I thought suffering. Horrid little beast! when he flew at my aunt and devoured—juste ciel!—her new

bonnet, of an elegance wholly unpar—unpar-ral—non! ca ne s'ecrit pas!—devoured it—it is I who say it to you, upon her head! And she—woman of miracle! calm as—as marble, as glass. 'Take him off, Folly!' no other word, only a glance, through her lorgnette—that it terrifies me, that lorgnette—round the destructified apartment, then at me. Why I did not die at that moment the saints may know; I do not.

"Then—a clamor at the door. A man, dark-eyed and very handsome, demanding his cherished pet, his Pepito. The creature had been seen to enter the window—ah! in effect, behold him! Briefly, all was soon over. The animal leaped to his master's arms; no cruel padrone this, but a tender nature, a heart of gold. He épanched himself (s'épanchait; another of Honor's word-coinages!) in gratitude to my aunt—who was all of the most gracious, (the fragments of her bonnet at her feet! figure it to yourself!) who speaks Italian

with perfect accomplishment—and to the gentillissima signorina, meaning me. I must positively learn Italian. It is of all languages the most melodious, the most golden. Perhaps my aunt will teach me. Strange indeed that one so aged should be so accomplished. After all, she has had time—tiens! nearly a century, probably. Enfin—finally—he bowed, with a grace seldom seen in these cold northern regions; Joliceur—I should say Pepito-bowed also, his tiny hand on his heart. My aunt-grande dame jusqu'au bout des ongles-made a sign to Miss Folly and I saw the gleam of a gold piece as it dropped into the little red cap—and they were gone! All was over; it remained but to collect the fragments of the beautiful bonnet, and to drink tea. Thus is life full of strange contrasts, even in London. An adventure, a catastrophe, a cup of tea. Et voilà!"

## CHAPTER IV

## THE HIGH SEAS

The Week of Wonder was over; the last evening was come. Just as well, thought Miss Folly. The little cup was brimming over; the child really could not hold any more. Apparently Mrs. Damian was of the same opinion; she looked thoughtfully at Honor twice or thrice in the course of the evening, and seemed to be considering her.

"Enough!" she said at last. "It has been just a pattern, Folly. To-morrow—we shall see!"

"To-morrow!" echoed Honor with the little clasp of her hands, so foreign, yet so pretty that neither lady had had the heart to criticize it. "To-morrow we start for New York!"

"Not at all!" Mrs. Damian replied briefly.

"For Bermuda! You may tell her, Folly; I am going to bed. Good-night, child! You have enjoyed your week? You have learned to love London? Good! Sleep well, and be up bright and early to-morrow."

She was gone, and Honor, open-mouthed and wide-eyed, turned to Miss Folly.

"What—what does it mean? She makes a jest, my aunt? Yes? But I am too stupid, I shall never understand."

"I'll tell you while I am brushing your hair!" said Miss Folly in the tranquil tone that was always like a quiet hand laid on the excitable girl. "Come!"

After a careful inspection of fire and window-fastenings, she led the way to the room that she and Honor shared in their pleasant lodgings. Here Honor slipped into her wrapper and obediently took her seat at the toilet table. Miss Folly, standing behind her, brushed with slow, careful strokes the splendid mane of red-gold hair which was Hon-

or's chief beauty in many eyes, while in her own it was a deplorable misfortune, almost a deformity. It was very fine, very thick, very wavy; it curled round the brush in ringlets charming to see, but difficult to reduce to order.

"Tell me if I pull!" said Miss Folly. "Yes, Honor, we are going to Bermuda. Mrs. Damian had a letter last week from her sister-in-law, who lives there: Mrs. Lionel Darrell, the widow of her only brother. Mrs. Darrell is out of health, and various matters have come up which make your guardian feel that she ought to see her before returning to America. Bermuda is a charming place. You will be sure to enjoy it. What is it, dear?" seeing Honor's bewildered look.

"Nothing! not truly anything, Miss Folly; only—it makes me dizzy, so quickly to change. Always I have been in one place, you see: to change, it is like standing on the head. But to my aunt, that makes nothing?"

"Nothing at all! Going to Bermuda is to

her what going to the park in Vevay would be to you. Habit, you see."

"Ah, the dear Park!" cried Honor. "Ah! shall I ever see it again?"

"Probably! Now you are tidy, and I'll race you to bed. Come!"

Liverpool. Soot, dirt, grimy ugliness everywhere: street after street, each worse than the last. Finally the dock, and the white steamer lying alongside, sending up admonitory puffs of steam. Here was a new world indeed for Honor. A sense of breathless hurry possessed her. The crowd, pushing and elbowing; the porters, wheeling loads of trunks—how could there be so many trunks in the world?—the shrieks of whistles, the ringing of bells; all seemed to urge her forward. She wanted to rush; she was sure that they would be late, that the steamer would start without them. Again and again she looked at her companions, an anxious question on her lips; but both were perfectly calm. Mrs. Damian might indeed be taking a walk in the Vevay park for any haste she showed; Miss Folly was counting trunks as if they were stitches in knitting. With an impatient little sigh, Honor turned and tried to interest herself in the stream of people who were mounting the gangplank close beside her. Their fellow-passengers in the Great Adventure! What would they be like? That lady was as nervous as she herself; she kept dropping her reticule and rescuing it from under the feet of the crowd that pressed steadily on and up.

"My reticule! oh! my reticule!"

Now she dropped her glasses! poor lady! ought one not to help her? Honor made a step forward, but Mrs. Damian was leaning on her arm, and in another moment the nervous lady had been swept on and out of sight. Here came a gentleman so stout, he filled the whole width of the gangway. He walked very slowly, puffing and wheezing. People tried to pass him, but he protested vehemently, squaring his arms so as to take up even more room.

"Don't push, sir! I will not be pushed; I will not be hurried. I have paid for a first class passage on this steamer, and——"

"So have I!" said a tall, slender man, slipping past him; "and I mean to benefit by it."

"Monstrous! this is monstrous!" protested the stout gentleman. There came a wave in the crowd, and he was swept forward still crying, "Monstrous!"

Here came a tall old gentleman, very distinguished-looking, in a beautiful, furtrimmed overcoat; and after him—oh! what a pretty girl!

Honor's heart beat suddenly quick and hard. The girl looked up, and their eyes met. What a sweet, sad face! she was unhappy. Honor knew she was unhappy. Perhaps they would meet, would become friends. Honor would comfort her, would

pour out her own sorrows; their tears would mingle——

"Now I think we may go on!" said Mrs. Damian. "The crowd has passed. Everything right, Folly? Keep step, child! Don't hurry, and don't jiggle! I cannot abide jiggling! 'Musing step and even gait'; Milton knew how a woman should walk, if he didn't know how to treat one."

Once on board, Miss Folly produced—apparently from nowhere—a folding camp chair, and established Mrs. Damian in a comfortable corner, screened from sun and wind. The lady nodded thanks and dismissal.

"I shall do very well here; go and see to the staterooms. And take the child with you; the little cat must see its new garret."

Broad staircases, shining with brass; long corridors with innumerable little doors opening from them: finally, one door thrown open by an obsequious, white-coated steward.

"Number 72, madam! Your trunks are

already here. My name is Kinnick; this bell will bring me at any moment. This other bell will bring the stewardess. Anything more? Very good, madam!"

Oh, the wonder of the little white room! Honor's room at *Pension Madeleine* had been white, also, and about the same size as this: but how different! Here everything glittered with brass and nickel fittings, and instead of holding the bare necessaries of sleep and toilet, was packed with every imaginable convenience—and inconvenience, too, Miss Folly said. The two snowy beds, one above the other, had elaborate guards of figured brass on the outward side; "to prevent your falling out; they all but prevent your getting in! Do you think you can manage the upper berth, Honor? Then I'll take the lower."

The narrow sofa was really a shelf, under which the luggage was stowed; on the wall were two shining mahogany oblongs which looked like cupboard doors, but which, when one turned a knob, revealed a complete washing apparatus. There was a cupboard, too; its door set with a long mirror, and its top packed with life-preservers. Over the sofabench was a little round window, through which——

"Oh! oh!" cried Honor. "We are moving, Miss Folly! We have started!"

"Yes," Miss Folly was arranging things methodically on the cupboard shelves. "Don't you feel the motion? We started three minutes ago. You would like to come up on deck, wouldn't you? We are all tidy here, I think. We will just see that everything is right in Mrs. Damian's room opposite."

Another white, glittering room, the twin of the first. Honor helped Miss Folly to unpack the steamer trunk, the roll of rugs, the "holdall." When all was stowed and arranged to take up the smallest possible amount of room, Miss Folly gave a satisfied nod. "Apple-pie," she said. "Shipshape and Bristol fashion; now we can go on deck, Honor."

Down the gray, swirling river, with the grim, sooty buildings on either side; out into the harbor, where more vessels and more kinds of vessels were lying than Honor had ever dreamed of, from the dingy tug and the battered herring ketch, to the stately liner steaming majestically up channel; finally, with a lift and a heave and a curl of foam around the prow, out into the open sea.

Mrs. Damian in her sheltered corner found it very pleasant to watch Honor, as she stood by the rail, her red-gold hair fluttering like a banner, her face rapt and shining.

"Yes, dear me!" she said to Miss Folly, on a campstool beside her. "I will never travel again without a young creature. You are any age, Folly, or no age; the Sphinx is your contemporary."

"Thank you!" said Miss Folly demurely.

"Perfectly correct; it is necessary for you to be self-contained and unexpressive; I should throw the fire-irons, if you were not. But this child—look at her! the very spirit of youth! She 'warms both hands before the fire of life', if you will. Yes, dear me! I was like that at her age, Folly. You needn't believe it, if you don't want to——"

"You are a good deal like her now, Mrs. Damian."

"Pooh! sparrow chatter!" said Mrs. Damian; but she looked pleased for all that.

When Honor could take her eyes off the sea, which was not very often, she absorbed with delighted wonder the details and perfections of the vessel. The smooth white decks, so admirable under foot; the mirror-bright brasses, the boats tucked snugly up in their canvas covers. Ah! the boats! A card in the stateroom had urged her to find her own boat —Number Six—and familiarize herself with

its position. She found it and studied it with ardor. Four steps from the little staircase, twelve steps from the main one. That was easy to learn! Honor practised it, with closed eyes, so that she could be sure of the way in the night, with the tempest beating about her. The thunder crashing, the lightning flashing; the spray flying over the doomed vessel—no! not doomed, only in great danger. Of course they would come out all right, Honor assured herself, but meanwhile—the women were crowding up the narrow staircase, crying and wailing, "The boats! where are the boats? The ship is sinking!" Suddenly a light form slips past them (not pushing rudely, like those people on the gangplank; just flitting past, hardly taking up any room at all.)

"I will guide you to the boat, ladies. Number Six, this way; four steps! let me take your hand!" (this was to the pretty, dark-eyed girl, who would, Honor felt sure, be overcome by

terror.) "I will protect you, sweet one! I will save you! Here is Number Six."

Just what next to do was not clear to Honor; they certainly could not get into the boats as they were. Ah! she knew. She would stand like marble, her arm round the fainting girl, till the Captain came and said, "Lower away Number Six!" then, rapidly, but firmly, she lifts the half-unconscious form, and——"

"Well, child!" said a familiar voice, "what are the wild waves saying?"

Honor started violently, and the color came flooding into her face. She had forgotten her aunt! In the dream-storm, in the imaginary peril, she had not once thought of her benefactress. She would have left her, aged and frail, to perish on the stairs, while she rescued a stranger. It was too terrible!

"My aunt! forgive!" she stammered, still half in her dream.

"By all means, when I know what crime you have committed."

Mrs. Damian's dark eyes were twinkling; she too had been a dreamer, when time was, and she read the look in the child's face.

"Meantime, suppose you come back to earth and get ready for dinner. Hark! there goes the bugle."

A merry peal rang out, so loud and clear that Honor started.

"Oh, the roast beef of Old England,
And oh, the old English roast beef!"

At the same instant, up the little staircase came a whiff, a delicious and appetizing whiff, of savory broth and roast chicken and I know not what beside.

"Oh!" cried Honor, now fully awake. "At the instant, Aunt Damian. I attend you! I am hungry, but hungry to eat shoes!"

The first meal on shipboard: a whole chapter in itself, of wonder and romance. The small tables, the flowers, the crowding passengers, the flitting waiters, the mysteries of

the menu—all lifting, swaying, sinking, in delicious rhythm. Their table was opposite the porthole, and Honor watched, fascinated, (by no means neglecting her dinner the while) as the round frame dipped, revealing a flash of blue, then swung up again. Mrs. Damian meanwhile watched with amused eyes. Mockturtle soup, fried sole, chicken pie——

"The child is a born sailor!" she said to Miss Folly in a tone of satisfaction. "Honor, you are enjoying your dinner? You feel no qualms?"

"Qual-lams! qu'est-ce que c'est—I would ask—what are qual-lams, my aunt?"

"They are what that unfortunate girl at the next table but one is feeling. Ah! there she goes. I thought she was nearing Hatteras."

Honor looked up, to see, passing close by her, the dark-eyed girl of her dream. She was deathly white, and her great eyes were full of terror and anguish. She hurried past; Honor sprang to her feet and started to follow.

"Sit down!" said Mrs. Damian. "What is the matter, Honor? Are you, too, nearing Hatteras? Do you feel dizzy or sick?"

"I? No, my aunt. But she—she looks terribly ill; she is alone; I go to assist——"

"Sit down!" repeated Mrs. Damian, imperatively. As Honor obeyed reluctantly, she added in a softer tone, "The child is seasick, my dear. She has gone to her stateroom, and the stewardess will assist her a great deal better than you could. Yes; dear me! there will not be half a dozen women at breakfast to-morrow morning. We begin to dance a bit. Ah! it feels good: eh, Folly? Cheer up, Honor! Try this cherry tart; it is excellent. I tell you you could do nothing for the girl that is not—probably—done already. The service on these boats is admirable."

"I could express my sympathy!" murmured Honor, half apologetic, half rebellious.

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"My dear! when one is seasick, one does not want sympathy. One wants—never mind! Eat your dinner, and be thankful for your immunities."

"Yes, my aunt!" said Honor meekly.

She would ask Miss Folly by and by what immunities were. She had not known that she possessed any. Meantime, the cherry tart was excellent.

# CHAPTER V

#### A NEW WORLD

Next morning, as Mrs. Damian had predicted, few ladies appeared in the breakfast room, or elsewhere. It was a fresh, crisp day, with white-caps tossing on the blue; the unbelievable sapphire blue that melted so magically into the unimaginable beryl-green that swirled and foamed in the wake of the vessel. The Coromandel was heaving and rolling before a smart breeze. Honor planted her feet firmly and held on tight to the after-rail. How glorious it was! Ah! to be alive, and at sea, that was the best that life could hold. If only her friends were here, Stephanie, Patricia, and the rest! But perhaps they would be ill, like that poor girl. Tiens! she had not been visible at all, that unfortunate one, all this wonderful day. If only Honor knew where her stateroom was, she might surely offer her sympathy at least: that could do no harm. Ah! the bird! the wonderful white bird!

"Miss Folly!" She staggered across the deck to where Mrs. Damian and Miss Folly sat in their sheltered corner. "Look! but look! Is it an albatross? Like the Ancient Mariner, not so?"

Miss Folly looked and shook her sensible head.

"No, Honor! only a big gull. The albatross is twice as big as that. There are more of them; pretty, aren't they?"

"Greedy creatures!" said Mrs. Damian, nodding at the gulls, where they wheeled and circled, their snowy wings flashing in the sun. "Abominably greedy and ill-mannered; but pretty to watch. My dear! We had an albatross once in the Indian Ocean."

"What!" cried Honor.

"Never reply in a monosyllable, when it can be avoided!" said the old lady. "Always temper it! 'Indeed!' or 'Really!' gives the effect equally well. Yes! an albatross, to be sure. It got caught in the rigging in a typhoon, and broke its leg. My Professor caught it, set the leg, and kept it in an empty stateroom till the bone knitted. It grew quite tame; 'came to the mariner's hollo!' you know, that kind of thing. When the Professor whistled, it would shake its great wings and hop on one leg to the door to be fed. We called him Samuel Taylor, after Coleridge, and I do believe the creature knew his name. Yes! dear me! He measured six feet from tip to tip."

"Oh! Aunt Damian, how wonderful! And did you keep him always?"

"You don't see him about, do you?" said the lady dryly. "We let him go, of course, when his leg was well. An albatross is not a traveling pet, child, except on shipboard. He stayed about the ship for several days, taking his meals regularly; yes, dear me! he had a fine appetite, poor Samuel! But one day the ship's monkey tried to catch him, and he flew away. We never saw him again. There, child! go back to your gulls, and don't fall overboard!"

Late that afternoon, as Honor was flying along the lower deck on some errand, she paused for a moment to tie her shoestring, leaning against the wall beside an open porthole. As she stooped, a sound came to her ears, the sound of weeping. A girl's voiceshe was sure it was a girl—crying and sobbing. Ah, but now! ah, it must be she. Impossible to refrain! After all, one was human. Honor looked about for a door; here was one, close by. Quietly she slipped in; found the corridor; found the tiny crosspassage, with its staterooms on either side, just like their own. She listened at one door: silence; at the other: the crying was there,



"'WHO ARE YOU? ARE WE SINKING?""



quieter now, but oh! how miserable! Very, very softly, Honor turned the handle of the door; peeped; entered, closing the door behind her.

The girl was lying in her berth, as white as the sheet that covered her. Her eyes were shut, but at sound of the closing door she opened them and gazed in astonishment at Honor. She was very pretty; oh, but, very pretty! prettier than anyone, except Patricia.

"What is it?" she asked faintly. "Who are you? Are we sinking?" She raised herself on one elbow, but sank back again with a despairing gesture. "I don't care if we are!" she said. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"Oh! I—" Honor stammered. "I—I am so sorry!"

The dark eyes looked at her in faint surprise.

"What are you sorry for? Are we sinking?"

"No! but no! we are going beautifully; it is just a good breeze. But you—I am sorry because you suffer. I saw you—yesterday, when you left the salon, and now—I heard you crying—I thought—was there perhaps anything I could do?"

The girl turned her head away listlessly.

"If you could get them to stop the ship!"
She murmured. "I shall die if it doesn't stop. Not that I care!" she added. "I'd rather be dead than like this."

This was too terrible, Honor thought. This could not be allowed. She did not think the ship could be stopped, and even if so——

"The doctor?" she suggested. "I will summon the doctor, not so? He can perhaps——"

The dark head was shaken with feeble vehemence.

"No! no! I will not have him. Ask the stewardess to bring some cracked ice. That

bell!" she motioned feebly. "And then go away, please."

"At the instant even!" Honor always lapsed into the French idiom in moments of agitation. She pressed the white knob, and a bell rang somewhere. She lingered at the door.

"I may wait till she comes, the stewardess?" she asked humbly. "It might be—you might want something—"

"I tell you I only want to die! I shall, too, I know I shall."

Full of terror, Honor turned to the stout, white-clad woman who now came bustling up.

"She thinks she is dying!" she said in a shaken whisper. "It is too terrible. Shall I fetch the doctor?"

"Bless yer 'art, Miss, she's been dyin' ever since we left the mouth of the river. She's all right, don't you fret! 'Ere, Miss!" to the sufferer. "'Ere's yer hice, with a dollop o' lemon-juice just to give it a tang. Now then!

Cheer up! there's plenty worse off than what you are, dearie!"

As she bent over the pillow, Honor slipped away, much cast down in spirit. She had been rejected! her sympathy had not been received. That fat woman, without a particle of sympathy, had been preferred to her. Life was very strange, very sad!

The wind had been rising rapidly during the last half hour. As she came out onto the deck, a sudden gust caught her, whirled her off her feet, and flung her into the arms of a sailor who was hastening in the other direction. She caught hold of and clung to him.

"Ask your pardon, Miss! quite a breeze here!"

He steadied her for a moment, then guided her to a sheltered spot, and touched his cap respectfully.

"Asking your pardon for the liberty, Miss!" he said.

"Oh! but you are so kind!" cried Honor.

"I thank you so heartsomely! Have I injured you?"

"Don't mention it, Miss! Quite a breeze to-night." He touched his cap again and was gone.

Keeping close to the wall, Honor crept along—the wind contesting each step furiously with her—till she met Miss Folly blown along in the opposite direction. The two clung together.

"Where have you been, Honor? I could not find you anywhere, and Mrs. Damian has been anxious. You must show yourself at once. Hold on tight; I believe it is blowing up a gale. Our chairs are just around the corner here; now for a tussle!"

Curled up snugly in her deck chair a few minutes later, in the lee of the after-house, while the wind shrieked in the rigging over head, Honor meditated over her adventure. Probably her aunt and the stewardess were right; probably people did not die of seasickness. All the same, it was terrible for that poor pretty sufferer, and sad, very sad, that her own overtures had been so decidedly rejected. Still—one had done one's possible. And if she had not gone, she might have missed the other half of the adventure. The sailor! how handsome he was! What a picture, in his spotless white! How strong his protecting arms, how kind his dark eyes! She hoped she would see him again. A sailor! the nursling of the sea and the blast: how wonderful!

Miss Folly was right about the wind. It did blow up a gale, and a lively one, that night. Lying in her berth, holding tight to the guard on one side and the wall on the other, tossed up and down like a shuttlecock, Honor felt that in all probability a more tremendous adventure was preparing than any she had yet encountered. The seas raced past the porthole (closed, in spite of her protest, by a respectful, but firm Kinnick) hissing and

foaming: the ship groaned and labored; everything in the world seemed to be shrieking, throbbing, thumping, in horrid confusion.

Hark! that crash, as of all the crockery in the world falling downstairs, was within the ship. Probably her timbers were falling, she was going to pieces under them; was foundering the word? Yet a foundery—or foundry was a place where things were made, n'est-ce pas? She seemed to hear Stephanie murmur vindictively, "Catastrophe of a language!" Stephanie hated English. Honor looked at the life-preservers, neatly stacked on top of the dress-cupboard, and tried to remember which way they went on. If you got one on wrong, you turned upside down in the water, and drowned horribly, with your feet sticking up in the air. If you got it right, howeverah! perhaps soon the moment would come. She would slip out quietly, she and Miss Folly. Between them they adjusted the preserver for

her aunt—so aged, so fragile, but ever undaunted—and led her to the stairs; between them they half guided, half carried her up. Twelve steps—here was boat Number Six, and beside it a stalwart figure in white.

"This way, lady!" cried the sailor. "No danger shall touch you while I am here!"

He holds out his hand, but she, drawing back, places in it that little frail one, like a white withered leaf, of the aged woman.

"Save her first! Do not think of me! I am young, it matters not!"

"Lower away Number Six!" thunders the Captain through his trumpet.

The others are placed in safety—Honor is not clear as to details, but it is done—and he turns once more to her.

"Go without you, my lady? Never! Trust yourself to me!"

Once more in those strong, protecting arms! lifted, seated in the boat; he takes his place at the helm; the boat is lowered, is afloat, is

tossed like an eggshell on the surge; now, "blow wind, rise sea!" (This was a favorite quotation of Honor's from "Very Hard Cash." It was not perhaps desirable that the wind should blow harder or the sea rise higher than at present, but she could not resist it.) They were borne darkly, fearfully afar—(another quotation; Shelley this time: "Littérature Anglaise" was very thorough at Pension Madeleine)——

"Are you awake, Honor? Isn't it fun?" Miss Folly's voice from the lower berth, calm and cheerful as usual.

Fun? Fun?—Why—why then——

"Oh!" cried Honor, as her head struck the wall violently. "Yes—but yes! Glorious fun! I—love—it!"

Next morning, a summer sky, with summer clouds moving slowly and peacefully across it. The wind had dropped to a gay, frolicsome breeze that whipped Honor's curls about her rosy cheeks. The sea was still high, but it

was once more sapphire, gilded with sunshine, leaping in merry play, tossing its white caps sportively aloft. Honor and Miss Folly took their constitutional, arm in arm, staggering valiantly along the white deck, that seemed to rear up in front of them and fall away behind, as they went. A white-clad form came toward them; it was the Sailor. In response to Honor's eager, "Good morning! Isn't it wonderful?" he touched his cap and grinned. Yes, grinned! There was no other word for it.

"Not 'arf a bobble o' sea on this mornin', Miss—takin' the liberty!"

As he passed, it was obvious—too obvious—that he was chewing a large quid of to-bacco.

Hélas! life was very—but very strange! Oh! oh! what was that?

"Miss Folly, look! but quickly look! what is it?"

Miss Folly looked; they both stood en-

tranced, watching. From the curling snowcrests, from the blue-green hollows of the waves, little creatures were rising, darting, flying, like silver arrows. The sun flashed on their radiant mail; they glittered like diamonds. Dozens, scores of them, like nothing that ever was seen.

"Flying fish!" said Miss Folly. "Aren't they pretty? Run and tell Mrs. Damian; she always likes to see them."

The sea was calm that night, and Honor, propped on her pillows, wrote, for the first time in some days, in her Journal.

"I am destined to be alone. I sought a friend—it was denied me. I thought I had found a hero, but he proves to be a vulgary one." (Honor's rendering of "vulgarian," Mrs. Damian's final and crushing term of disparagement.) "A hero to chew tabac? Never! So, at the end, my destiny is solitude. There are, it is true, my aunt and Miss Folly, both good as bread, both all that there

is of kindness as of wisdom, even remarkabilitility (that did not look just right, but Honor hurried on; Miss Folly might come to bed at any moment.) but old—ah, but—old! What could they know of youth and its longings, its passionate yearnings after the beautiful? (Martha Folly was twenty-five!) Courage, sad heart! Be the rock on which the wild waves break——"

Honor paused, pencil uplifted. Perhaps it would be better to be the wild waves that broke upon the rock? Yes, decidedly!

"Is that all, Mrs. Damian?" Miss Folly's clear voice outside. "Nothing more? Then good-night, and good rest!"

Scramble! under the pillow with the precious volume. Down on the pillow with the curly head. The eyes closed, the hands peacefully folded on the breast——

"You are not asleep, you know, you little scamp!" said Miss Folly, after a brief examination. "You must learn to keep your eyelids from quivering if you want to impose upon me. What have you been up to? Ah! writing! Another time, push the book a little further in, so that the corner does not stick out; do you see?"

## CHAPTER VI

#### AN ACHIEVEMENT

"Wake up, Honor! wake up, and see Bermuda!"

Honor started up on her elbow, and, after one glance, scrambled down from her berth, flung on her wrapper, and, kneeling on the bench, gazed out of the open porthole. Opposite, across a space of clear beryl-green water, was a long, rocky coast, sprinkled thick with dusky trees. Here and there, houses gleamed snowy-white amid the green; low houses, simple and perfect as Greek temples. Here and there a spire rose; and on a distant hill the windows of a lighthouse caught the morning sun and flashed it back in diamonds. Here and there a white sail glanced, a tugboat sent up its column of smoke, an oar dipped, with here too a diamond flash. Near at hand, on the right, a curve of living snow foamed and broke ceaselessly; on the left, the white roofs of a town shone amid the green.

"Oh, beautifool! beautifool!"

"Accent on the first syllable!" said Miss Folly kindly. "Now I would dress, if I were you—" Miss Folly's own toilet was nearly completed—"and come up on deck. It is near breakfast time, and you ought to get a fuller view than this before we come to St. George's."

Honor literally flew into her clothes. Buttons! why three millions of buttons? Hooks and eyes were even worse, could that be possible. Ah! for example! to give one's life to these things, it was devastating! Need she tie her shoes, just this once? No one would notice—

"My child!" she seemed to hear Sœur Séraphine's silver voice: "it is necessary to pay to the Giver of all things the compliment of a decent appearance. The sight of an incomplete toilette cannot be pleasing to anyone, human or Divine."

Honor sat down and tied the shoes accurately; a bowknot, the loops tied thereafter in a square knot: this secured for the day an appearance comme il faut. The same voice, heard with the keen ear of memory and affection, forbade her to slight by one stroke of the brush the preparation of her hair. Tears of impatience blurred her eyes. She wished she had no hair: to be bald, what bliss! what trouble saved! but——

"Thy hair is indeed a gift of the good God, my little Honor! Regard, that it resembles the sunrise! Let thy thoughts vie with the glorious sun in thanks and praise!"

At last! at last! they would be content, the two dear ladies. These others also, whose eyes no speck escaped, could find nothing awry, nothing huddled or careless. A trim and tidy Honor shot like an arrow up the stair and out into the open air.

If the ring of the porthole enclosed such wonders, what was to be said of the broad circle of the horizon? Honor leaned over the rail, speechless, well-nigh breathless. Was this still earth, or was the door open into another world?

"Pretty, eh?" Mrs. Damian's voice, crisp and kindly, spoke at her elbow. "There is no prettier approach anywhere, I believe. That is St. George's. We shall stop in a moment: ah! we are slowing down already."

"Is it that—do we debark here?" fluttered Honor.

"No! we drop the mail, and a few passengers, and take on others for Hamilton. Hamilton is the capital of Bermuda. Here comes the St. George's boat!"

From the landlocked harbor a small steamer came puffing out with an air of business-like

importance. It approached, and the *Coromandel*, her engines at rest, lay awaiting her. For once, Honor was not ready for the breakfast bugle, which broke cheerfully on the quiet air. To eat! when all this was going on! how could it be?

"I am not very hungry, Aunt Damian!" she said hurriedly. "If I might stay here and watch? By and by a biscuit, perhaps: I have some in my box; yes?"

"No!" Mrs. Damian's tone was very crisp. "Breakfast first, my chicken! a good, hot breakfast to grow on, then all you can hold of the other things. Beauty is everything except nourishment. Give me your arm!"

Stifling a sigh, checking a movement of impatience, Honor turned and offered her arm, and they went down the brass-gleaming stairs to the dining-room. Honor stared to see it filled with people, many of them women, whom she had not seen since the first day

out. For the past few hours the sea had been smooth as a mirror, and pallid faces were gathering round the table, some woe-begone, recalling past misery, some hopeful, foreseeing better things. As Honor ate her porridge (she was hungry, after all!) a slender form passed her, and sat down at a table close by. It was the Dark Eyed One! Her traveling companion, the handsome old gentleman with the mustaches and fur coat (the latter now laid aside!) was already in his place, punctual as usual. He had not missed a meal since they left Liverpool. Honor had cast many glances of wistful admiration at his erect figure, his martial air, his general look of distinction. Evidently a great gentleman, perhaps a "milor." How solitary he was! How sad for him to be deprived of his lovely daughter, even for a short time! And for the Dark Eyed One, what joy to possess such a parent! Ah! if she, Honor, were but his daughter, too! How she would cling to him and comfort him, telling him that the dear one would be better soon. Then, when the dear one was better, how they would sit together at his feet, their arms entwined, drinking in his words of fatherly wisdom, feeling his caressing touch on their hair! In short, Honor had, in her own fashion, woven a very pretty little romance round the tall old gentleman, and now she felt a thrill of joyful sympathy at the reunion of father and daughter. The gentleman looked up as the girl took her place opposite him.

"Well, Nella! so you thought fit to get up at last. A pretty mess you have made of the voyage!"

His tone was harsh and struck painfully on Honor's ear, used all her life to kind and friendly voices. She could not help hearing, though she had been carefully trained never to listen.

"Listen, my child, to remarks addressed to yourself, and to no other; thus, much trouble may be avoided throughout life."

Dear Madame Madeleine! how wise she was! But Honor could not avoid hearing this sharp, incisive voice, nor the deprecating murmur of reply.

"I am sorry, father! I have been ill—I could not get up!"

"Ill! Pooh! seasick! If you had come up on deck, you would have got over it the second day. Seasickness is a good excuse for lazy people to lie in bed. Pass the mustard!"

Honor's eyes filled with angry tears. How had she been mistaken! What a dreadful, cruel old man! It was ever thus; her dreams were always rudely shattered. There was a lovely poem Sœur Séraphine used to read them, about a gazelle—Honor had always meant to ask what a gazelle was—"le poète Moore" must have suffered as she did. She looked up, to meet her aunt's glance, full of grave meaning.

"Quiet!" it seemed to say. "This is not your affair, nor mine!"

Honor looked at Miss Folly, to read the same message in her sensible blue eyes. How, then? One saw people suffer, one heard them brutalified (Honor always made a word when she needed one!) and one did nothing? Was this the world? How different from Pension Madeleine!

At least, one good thing had happened; she now knew the name of her friend—for sudden resolve flamed up in Honor's heart: the Dark Eyed One should be her friend, whatever it cost. Nella! what a lovely name! Nella! it sounded like silver bells. How should it be accomplished? What was the first step? The second, rather; the first had already been tried, and had proved a lamentable stumble.

Honor's mind was busy with this problem, as she enjoyed her crisp bacon and delicately poached egg. A talisman! if she could find a talisman, or failing that, a token of some kind. "Token" was not so beautifool—beautiful—a word, but no matter! She considered the table. No talisman was visible, but in the middle stood a covered glass dish, a compotière, full of sweets. Pink and white sweets, some round, some heart-shaped. Ah! at the good hour! here was a token indeed. A pink—Honor rejected the clumsy little word—a rose-colored, a rosy heart! It might be—it should be!

"Candy after breakfast, Honor?"

Honor started, and almost dropped the rosy heart, which she had abstracted, as she thought, unnoticed by the watchful eyes.

"My aunt!" she stammered. "With your permission—it is not to eat! It is—for a purpose——"

Mrs. Damian's eye twinkled.

"Oh, if it is for a purpose, far be it from me to interfere. Does the purpose require you to remain here, or shall we go upstairs?"

Honor rose obediently, and in doing so, dropped her napkin. Stooping to pick it up, she moved a few steps backward and found herself close to Nella, who sat silent, with dejected looks, making a pretense of eating. With a swift movement, Honor slid the pink heart into the girl's left hand, as it lay on her lap. Nella looked up with a start, and met a look so warm, so glowing with good-will, sympathy, admiration, and a dozen other ardent young emotions, that the color crept into her pale cheek, and a faint answering glance into her dark eyes. She opened her lips, but before she could speak: "Eat your breakfast!" said the harsh voice impatiently. cannot spend the morning here, waiting for you."

Honor sprang to give her arm to Mrs. Damian. Her heart was beating fast, partly with sympathy and anger, but chiefly with triumph. She had done it! The token had been accepted; the bond was established.

Up on deck again, to find still another new world opening. They were entering—through, oh! what a narrow passage between what frowning rocks!—a wide harbor, where many vessels lay at anchor. Before them, on one hand, were the broad wharves and clustered buildings of a town, a white town, dazzling in the morning sun, which beat fiercely down upon it; on the other, cool heights and depths of green, with houses set among them singly or in small groups.

"Hamilton!" Mrs. Damian waved her hand in one direction; "and Paget!" nodding in the other. "Which do you like best, child?"

"Oh, Paget!" cried Honor. "This looks so hot, and never of my life have I liked towns—except London and dear Vevay! But yonder, how cool, how green, how delicieux! It is to Paget I would go, my aunt, if—if it were your pleasure!"

Honor spoke timidly; there was never any knowing what would be the lady's pleasure.

"Good!" said Mrs. Damian in her most satisfied, comfortable tone. "I am glad you prefer Paget, for that is where we are going. Yes; dear me! What is the old saying?

"'From Crow Lane to—something—side,
Nothing there but foolish pride.'

Said by people who couldn't get into Paget, bien entendu. Now, child, here we are! Folly, is everything up?"

"Everything, Mrs. Damian."

Honor started to her feet.

"Oh! no, Miss Folly! and I have not helped you! I meant to pack all, but *all*, for all of us!"

"Heaven forbid!" said Mrs. Damian, sotto voce.

"You shall unpack, Honor!" kind Miss Folly smiled at the distressed child. "I did not want you to miss the arrival, my dear; and I am so used to doing it. All you have to do is to put on your good hat, and tuck your tam into your bag; run, now!"

The passengers were huddled close to the gangway, all except Mrs. Damian and Miss Folly, who sat quietly in their accustomed place. Honor was at the rail, watching with eager eyes the process of debarkation. There was her trunk! oh! she must follow it: it would be lost! Turning hastily round, she started violently, to find herself looking into the dark eyes and sad face of Nella.

"Oh!" cried Honor again, but in how different a tone. "Oh! it is you! Hush! speak low and quickly. Will you be my friend? I long for you! I despair for a friend; you, too, n'est-ce pas? I see it in your eyes; you also are alone."

The dark eyes filled with tears.

"I am very much alone, but I don't know—you mean to be kind, I'm sure, but I don't know who you are; and my father——"

"Listen!" broke in Honor, after a rapid

glance had assured her that her companions were still seated, and the Ogre (to this had the "milor" descended in her mind) standing at a little distance, engaged in talk with the purser.

"Listen! My name is Honor Bright. am American, orphaned, both my beloved parents dead it is three years. I travel with Mrs. Damian—behold her there!—my father's cousin, very good, very distinguished, all that there is of grande dame, but ancient—as you see!—her companion, Miss Folly, also good as an angel, but also old—though less so, naturally. I was happy at Vevay, in dear Pension Madeleine, with my friends; you shall hear of my friends, Patricia, Stephanie, Vivette—even poor Maria!—ainsi—thus—I am torn from them, do you see, and from the dear ladies, Madame Madeleine and Sœur Séraphine, truly named of a seraph, who have cared for me since I was all little. I travel, I see London—oh! things of miracle! but I

burn, I perish, for a friend, one of my own age, to whom I can pour out my heart. I see you! I feel on the instant that here I could love, here I could trust. My heart goes out to you. Naturally at first you do not understand; pauvrette, you were suffering. I was wrung with grief, with desire to help you, but no! it was not possible. Now—Nella, shall it be? Are we friends? Speak quickly, for the og—for your father looks this way."

All this was poured out in a rapid torrent, half whisper, half murmur. Small wonder that the dark girl looked bewildered.

"Are we friends?" repeated Honor earnestly.

"Oh! yes!" faltered Nella. "I should like it very much, if—if it were possible. But it will not be. My stepfather never lets me speak to strangers. Oh! he is coming; please, please go!"

"Your name and where you go to stay!"

whispered Honor. "I will manage the rest!"

"Nella Castiglione: Hotel Bel Air. He is Sir Hubert Cranston. Hush! good-by!"

"Good-by—sweetheart! Keep the rosy heart till we meet again."

With a smile and an ardent pressure of the hand, Honor slipped through the crowd, and took her stand beside her aunt. Mrs. Damian noted her heightened color, her shining eyes, and quickened breathing.

"How now, chicken!" she said. "Are you getting impatient? Time enough! We will wait till this mob has gone ashore. Patience! Watch the crowd—there is always something to learn from a crowd—and think about—what is it? Your purpose!"

Honor smiled down into the bright brown eyes.

"Dear aunt!" she murmured, "my purpose—is fulfilled!"

## CHAPTER VII

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Honor never in her life forgot her first drive in Bermuda. A victoria was waiting for them on the wharf, drawn by two fine gray horses, and driven by a jet black negro in spotless white.

"How do you do, Santo? Glad to see you! Mrs. Darrell well? You have rooms engaged for us at the Bel Air?"

"I hab so, Mrs. Damian, ma'am. But Mrs. Darrell say she hope you come up to luncheon to-day, and she expect you at Creston sartain sure, you and the other ladies."

His broad smile took in Miss Folly and Honor, who smiled responsive.

"Mrs. Darrell, she right pleased you get in fore luncheon, by cause dis afternoon she hab her marcies and sham poor, and she not able to see you. I take you and your ladies right up now, if 'greeble. Dat 'greeble, Mrs. Damian, ma'am?"

"Marcies and sham poor, eh?" Mrs. Damian looked puzzled for an instant; then, "Oh! I see. Her masseuse, to be sure. Yes, Santo, we'll go up at once. Help me in! Mrs. Darrell is very kind. There is a van for our luggage? Good! Send it to the hotel! All ready. Now, Honor, use your eyes!

Through the hot, glaring street, with its white-clad, hurrying throng of people; along the harbor side, where the ferry boats plied back and forth, and the pretty sailboats lay at anchor; then on for miles and miles, it seemed, in a wholly new and wholly beautiful world. The road—smooth and hard, of a pleasant greenish white hue-wound along between walls of gray coral rock, tapestried with delicate ferns. Above the walls rose hedges such as Honor had never dreamed of, here of hibiscus, the splendid scarlet blossoms starring the lustrous green, there of rose-pink oleander, there again of jasmine or honey-suckle. Behind the hedges, crowning gentle slopes or nestling in little meadows, the low white houses, embowered in greenery, seemed to smile a welcome. Most of them were of one story only, with wide steps, ramp-enclosed, leading to open verandas.

"Oh!" cried Honor. "But look, my aunt! It is as if they held out arms to us, kind arms of welcome."

Mrs. Damian nodded with a smile.

"The welcoming arms!" she said. "The sign, or cognizance, or whatever you like to call it, of Bermuda. I am glad you recognize it, child. Bermudians—real Bermudians—are the kindest people in the world, and the most hospitable."

She was silent for a while, and then added suddenly:

"My dear! did you ever see a very large yellow cat, blinking in the sun?"

Honor started from her rapt contemplation of the beauty around her, and stammered:

"I have seen a yellow cat, my aunt; not large, though. It belonged to the cousin of our Margoton, at *Pension Madeleine*. It was a miserable; it killed a bird two times."

"You cannot kill a bird two times. You mean, two times—or twice—it killed a bird. Dear me! it was I who killed the birds, though."

Puzzled, as so often, by the old lady's remark, and too polite to ask for an explanation, Honor looked round her.

"Do you see a yellow cat, Aunt Damian?"
"Not yet!" said Mrs. Damian dryly. "I
don't like yellow cats!" she added. "Don't
talk about them."

This was manifestly unjust, the subject being of her own introduction, but Honor had learned something of her aunt's ways, and changed the subject.

"You said-pardon, my aunt, if I under-

stood wrong—you killed once birds, your-self? How then—if I may ask!"

"My dear! yes; dreadful thing! The last time I was here, ten years ago. She-Mrs. Darrell—I stayed with her that time— She had a flock of little love-birds; pretty creatures; stupid as beetles—if beetles are stupid; I don't speak their language; they may have a philosophy, my Professor would say— Where was I? My dear! yes! love-birds. One day she went on a trip to St. George, all day expedition; left the birds in my care. I thought fresh air would be good for them. I put the cage on the verandah roof outside my window. My dear! I forgot them till evening, and they were all dead, every one. Sun too hot. Yes! dear me! dreadful thing."

"Oh, dr-r-readful!" Honor acquiesced earnestly. "Poor things! and poor you!" she added, with the light touch on Mrs. Damian's sleeve which was as near a caress as she dared come. "What did you do, my aunt?"

"Why—I don't know what possessed me!" Mrs. Damian spoke slowly and thoughtfully. "I was really extremely sorry; but—well, I put them all in her bed—Annabella's—in a row, their little heads out, the sheet drawn up tidily—I don't know what possessed me! Of course she never forgave it; I don't wonder!"

Up and up! now in long, slow, gentle curves, now in zigzag turns which driver and horses negotiated skilfully. Looking back, the town across the harbor seemed to radiate white heat even at this distance, while before them the country became more and more deeply embowered in green. The dusky cedars dotted every open space and pasture; tall palms overshadowed the road; banana patches showed their broad tattered leaves and clusters of fruit, which—in Honor's wondering eyes—seemed to grow upside down.

At length they turned into a gateway fairly smothered in creepers. Honor could just make out the name "Creston" on the gate-



"I BID YOU WELFIARE TO CRESTON, LADIES,"



posts. A broad avenue, bordered by stately trees, of a kind unknown to Honor, led still upward; at the end stood a long, low house, not white this time, but of a soft russet yellow. Mrs. Damian looked at Miss Folly.

"All to match!" she said. "It used to be white. Don't speak to me!"

The door was opened by a negro butler, who might have been the driver's twin and was indeed his brother. He also was clad in white, but wore a yellow and white striped waistcoat. He bowed low and respectfully.

"Welcome, Mrs. Damian! I bid you welcome to Creston, ladies!"

He spoke with dignity, his face full of cordial feeling.

"Thank you, Lepanto! How are you? Well? Good! How is Mrs. Darrell?"

"Mrs. Darrell, she am po'ly, obliged to you, Mrs. Damian, ma'am. She's in the drawing room, expecting of you. This way, ladies, if convenient!"

Bowing low again, he ushered the travelers across a wide hall, hung with great branches of coral, red, white, purple, and yellow, and opened a door with a third low bow.

"Mrs. Damian and her young ladies!" he announced, in deferential accents, at the same moment flashing a smile at Honor, so wide and sudden that she started involuntarily. She had never seen negroes before, and was as yet unable quite to believe that they were "real."

At the far end of the room, a lady was seated, who rose slowly, as they entered: a large lady, with ample draperies of russet yellow silk billowing about her. At sight of this Mrs. Damian gave so shrewd a pinch to Miss Folly's arm that anyone except that discreet young lady would have winced or started. Honor opened wide eyes of astonishment. The lady was all yellow! Her hair, disposed in large, flat bandeaux in the fashion of fifty

years before, had evidently been golden in her youth, and was now of a russet hue hardly darker than her dress. Her eyes were like brownish topazes. Her complexion, once cream and roses, was now (one of the party privately thought) "butter and eggs." Still, she was a handsome woman, and thoroughly aware of the fact.

"My dear Honor!" she murmured, advancing two steps with a languid motion. "What a pleasure! so long since we have met!"

Her voice was soft and velvety, but without resonance; it was almost a purr, Honor thought. Mrs. Damian advanced briskly, took the plump hand extended toward her, and brushed the offered cheek lightly with her lips.

"You look extremely well. I was told you were ill."

Mrs. Darrell sighed, a long and billowy sigh.

"Looks are deceitful, Honor!" she said. "I am very far from well. In fact-but be seated, pray! I am unable to stand on my feet, and you must be weary after the terrible voyage. These are the young friends of whom you wrote?"

"Miss Martha Folly, my companion; Honor Bright, my ward!" Mrs. Damian presented them with an introductory wave, and they all sat down, Mrs. Damian in a straight-backed and uncompromising chair, Honor on a curiously carved cedar-wood stool by her side. Mrs. Darrell sank back in her deeply cushioned armchair.

"I should apologize for asking you to come up directly; I trust Santo explained. My masseuse comes after luncheon; then I rest. and later comes my hair specialist. This is a busy day. Ah!" she sighed again. "The terrible voyage! the very thought of it shakes my poor nerves. Did you suffer atrociously?"

"We had a delightful passage!" Mrs.

Damian's crisp tones were like breaking icicles. "Honor enjoyed it specially, didn't you, Honor?"

"Oh, but enorrmousely!" cried Honor, with all her heart in her voice. "It was enchantment, Madame! only too short!" she added with a little sigh.

Mrs. Darrell raised a tortoise shell lorgnette and looked at her curiously.

"Ah! the poor child!" she said. "She shows the traces of it. And you, Honor!" to Mrs. Damian. "You show—it is so long since we have met—terribly, the havoc wrought by your wandering life. You are older than I, but you would not be so withered and worn if you had led a reasonable life. Your appearance shocks me. I trust this child is not to be dragged round the world on a harrow, as you have been."

The tone was soft and purring, but Honor colored high with resentment; she glanced at Miss Folly and saw an answering flame in her

cheeks, though her look was serene as usual; at Mrs. Damian, and saw her dark eyes twinkling with amusement.

"You and I were born in the same year," she said composedly. "Documentary evidence, my dear. You are certainly wonderfully well-preserved, Annabella."

"I feel it a duty to the Departed!" said Mrs. Darrell, gravely. "Lionel always said that woman's first duty was to look her best. He valued beauty so highly, you know."

"I know! Is there a room where I could rest, Annabella? I should like a few moments' rest before lunch—on account of my complexion!" she added with a glance at Miss Folly.

"Of course! most important. Lepanto!" she touched a bell, and the smiling butler appeared. "Show the ladies upstairs! Mrs. Damian to the green room, and the—a—young ladies to the coral room. Luncheon is at half past one."

"Sphinx," said Mrs. Damian, "hand me that sponge, will you? That is, if it is quite dry. Thank you!"

Receiving the sponge, the lady threw it with considerable force to the other end of the room.

"Thank you!" she repeated. "That was a relief. Now you may put it away, and come and sit down here. Don't fidget! Listen! As soon after luncheon as is decent, we will go to the Bel Air as arranged. There I will rest, and the child will look out of window, while you go find a house."

"Yes, Mrs. Damian. In Paget?"

Both ladies spoke as if the errand were to buy a spool of thread.

"Naturally! where else? A house, a view, trees, jasmine, and a woman to cook. There is an agent in Hamilton; see to it! Now—about the child!"

"Yes, Mrs. Damian. You wish me to tell her——?"

Mrs. Damian looked at the sponge.

"I may want to throw it again!" she murmured. "My dear! I wish her to have the bare facts, no more. Improper for me to convey them to her directly, of course. My brother Lionel was a conchologist of international reputation. His passion was coral. For a new coral, he would starve, burn, or freeze. I am quite aware that he could not do the latter in pursuit of coral. Don't interrupt me! I know you haven't, but don't! He married Annabella Horton for her beauty, which was extreme. He brought her—after several years in California, studying the corals of the Pacific Coast—here to Bermuda. The voyage was exceptionally rough—my dear! I have felt the boat turn over three separate times in my own experience, and have been black and blue from head to foot-and she refused to repeat it. Refused—to—repeat —it! Five and twenty years ago; she has been here ever since."

Mrs. Damian paused, and seemed to review the past, with knitted brows.

"Well!" she went on presently. "As it was to be, so it was. My brother Lionel was, like me and my Professor, a traveler. He loved the earth, every foot of it; loved the sea even more. To roam from country to country, from sea to sea, collecting shells and corals for the Simpkinsian Museum with which he was connected, had been his life. He was now anchored—more or less—in Bermuda. The Earthly Paradise, I grant you. If one had to be anchored, what better place could one choose? But he had never been anchored. Tragic! yes! He plunged deeper and deeper into coral; became the chief authority on coral. Built a small submarine, in which he explored the roots of these islands; finally, was drowned on the reef. Don't speak to me!"

She was silent, and after a while went on: "The family property came to me. My

brother had enough of his own to make his widow comfortable for life, but she—was dissatisfied with the arrangement. We need not go into that. I have been here once since Lionel's death, and did not expect to come again; but—she wrote, as you know, that she was ill, wished to see me on affairs of importance—well! here I am. It remains to be seen what she is after. I confess I have not an idea. You may tell the child as much of all this as seems proper. There! Tuck me up, Folly! thanks! wake me in twenty minutes."

## CHAPTER VIII

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The first Bermudian meal was another thing Honor never forgot. The scallops, delicately cooked in their own beautiful shells; the superb fish—amber fish, she was told: one of the dozen or so "best" varieties of the Fish-eater's Paradise—the pawpaws and bananas; finally, the beautiful Surinam cherries, piled high in a crystal dish.

"Oh, Miss Folly, look!" Honor spoke low, almost in a whisper. "They are like fairy tomatoes, not so? and good—my faith! but délicieux!"

It was not a gay meal. Miss Folly and Honor were mostly silent, except when spoken to. Mrs. Damian talked in a brisk, businesslike way, offering a remark much as Lepanto handed a dish. Mrs. Darrell received remark or dish with impartial consideration, and replied with sedate melancholy.

"London! ah! I could wish to have seen London. It is one of the sad things about exile, that one cannot see famous places. I might envy you your robust health and lack of sensitiveness, Honor, were it not that delicate feelings go deepest, as dear Lionel used to say. An anemone, he said, was more sensitive than a cabbage-rose. Lepanto, these bananas are fried too brown. They should be gold-color, tell Maria; this is the second time they have been brown. You notice, Honor, that I try to preserve the note of gold; Lionel made so much of it. He called me his marigold, you remember. Dear Lionel!"

Honor was thankful when luncheon was over, and she and Miss Folly were given permission to go where they would.

"The carriage will be here in half an hour!" said Mrs. Darrell. "Far too soon for my de-

sire, but an invalid has little freedom. You will find shade in the south garden, young people, if you wish to go out. The house is cooler, though."

Honor and Miss Folly gladly sought the garden. The sunlight beat white and hot on the open spaces, but they found a cool-looking stone bench under a tree, and ensconced themselves there in the thick shadow.

"Ouf!" said Honor. "I breathe. Miss Folly-dear, do you like that lady?"

"We have just eaten her bread!" said Miss Folly sedately.

"Ouf! yes! all the same—oh! oh! the bird! the wonderful bird!"

There was a flash of vivid scarlet, and a cardinal bird alighted on a tree close beside them. Honor held her breath, and squeezed her companion's hand; but his Eminence was very tame, and seemed not to regard them as he pecked at the berries that hung in graceful clusters from the "Pride of India."

"He is not afraid!" whispered Honor. "So splendid and so bold! a scarlet bird should be bold, n'est-ce pas? But if the yellow cat should come! tiens! I have seen no cat, Miss Folly."

"Haven't you?" replied Miss Folly tranquilly. "There is a catbird, at least! see his long tail. Perhaps he will give us a song!"

Sure enough, the sober gray bird, with a flirt of his long slender tail, broke into a song so clear and sweet that Honor forgot everything else, and listened intently. From a distance, another answered in golden notes; then a third. It was a heavenly little concert. The trio lasted for some minutes, the cardinal apparently taking no notice. Finally, however, he turned round on his perch, and lifting his scarlet throat, burst into a succession of roulades, quavers, and trills, silver-sweet and shrill. Presently—another flash and flutter, deep blue this time; a bluebird alighted

on a drooping branch, and in turn poured out his lovely song.

"They are welcoming us!" said Honor. "It is the welcome to Paradise, not so? Could we live always in this garden, Miss Folly, dear! how long do we stay here?"

"Half an hour, Honor!"

"And then?"

"We go to a hotel for a day or two. After that, I am not quite sure. I hope to find a cottage; that is what Mrs. Damian would like best."

"She loves not this lady!" breathed Honor softly. "So much I may say, Miss Folly, for I feel it under my skin. Why then are we here?"

"That reminds me!" said Miss Folly. "I meant to tell you a little——"

Tea-time found the party comfortably established in a pleasant apartment of the Hotel Bel Air, with a balcony overlooking the harbor.

This seemed to Honor the height of everything that was romantic and delightful. She wished that they might stay here forever. What could be more enchanting? Mrs. Damian shook her head decidedly.

"Wait, child! this is well enough; but a house of our own will be better. I hope Folly will find us one. In a hotel one does not really live; though I have spent much of my life in them!" she added ruefully. "What do you see from your balcony, child?"

"Oh! my aunt, such wonders! The water is like gold now, as the sun sinks. Boats come and go; shall we go in a boat, Aunt Damian? A boat with a sail! oh! never of my life have I been in a boat with a sail. Madame Madeleine had terror in them: they became reversed, she said—how then?"

She stopped short, as Mrs. Damian looked up.

"That is not right, reversed?"

"Capsized, or upset, is what you mean, my

dear. Well! I don't expect to sail much myself, but you and Folly may, if we can find a good boat, and a careful boatman. It should be easy enough. My dear! I have sailed my Professor all over this harbor. I know every rock in it."

"My aunt! Sail? Cause to move the boat, you mean—yourself?"

The lady nodded.

"Cause to move the boat! Your English is so quaint, my child, it is a pity to—but 'propel' is what you mean. Yes, indeed! You see, Honor—" her eyes were twinkling—"I was not born old. Young people find it next to impossible to realize this fact in human nature. The old were once young; do you understand? I was once your age; I was even a baby. Try to realize this!"

"Yes, my aunt! but yes!" murmured Honor, much abashed; and then, with one of the sudden, flashing smiles which were so like Mrs. Damian's own (but only Miss Folly

knew this), she cried, "Ah! but why was I not there, Aunt Damian? Figure to yourself what a bébé wholly adorable you must have been!"

"Sparrow chatter!" said the old lady. "A sparrow cannot be a goose, Honor! That's a fact in natural history. Hark! is that Folly coming in?"

It was Miss Folly, and she brought good news. She had come, the agent said, in the very nick of time. Heathcote, one of the most desirable houses in Paget, was to be unexpectedly vacated, the tenants being called suddenly to England by urgent family matters. They would not return; Heathcote was to let. There would be many applicants for so charming a house, but since Miss Folly was the first on the spot——

"I thought best to secure it at once!" said Miss Folly. "Thank you, Honor! only one lump, please!"

Honor clasped her hands.

"What misfortune! again I have put two; it is that I like the sugar so much, I fail to remember——"

"My dear!" Mrs. Damian looked up from her own tea. "It is a lesson of life. Give people their tea—and other things—as they like them, not as you like them; this is a thing to learn. Remember it! You did right, Folly; I will not say as usual, because a spoiled Sphinx is a Sphinx spoiled. My Professor thought Heathcote the prettiest house in Bermuda. When can we move in?"

"They sail—the Anson family—on Saturday; the agent thought we might move in on Friday, they taking these rooms for the night. They want a night in Hamilton."

"Good! Friday. This is Wednesday. I shall vegetate; I always like to vegetate after a voyage, even a toy one; and you can show the child the proper things in Hamilton, the cathedral, the rubber tree, and all the rest of it. Don't forget the little museum under the

Library. My Professor found some of the best things in it, and it is a fine collection as far as it goes."

Honor's room had a balcony of its own, a tiny one, but quite big enough for romance. That night, long after she was supposed to be in bed, she knelt there, her arms resting on the balustrade, looking out over the harbor. (She might have sat; there was a chair; but kneeling was far more romantic.) The harbor was full of lights. Some darted hither and thither, on the prows of moving boats; others hung stationary from anchored vessels. All were doubled in the still black water, which seemed another star-powdered heaven. Here, on the Paget shore, the lights were few, and these twinkled amid the dusky masses of trees and shrubs. Somewhere there was the house, which—in two days now—would be her home for a time. Did she want to go? Doubtless it would be pleasant, but—to leave this spot so enchanted, where, besides, her friend was? She had not seen Nella at dinner; that had been a disappointment. Ah! if only this next balcony might be hers! Honor started and surveyed the balcony with keen interest. Why not? She must be somewhere; why not here as well as anywhere? To find out—but on the instant even!

The two balconies nearly touched. Following thought with action in her own headlong manner, Honor grasped the rail of the balcony and, swinging herself lightly over, peered eagerly into the neighboring room. A room the very mate of her own: empty save for wraps and luggage strewn about. Ah! the door opened; now! it must be——

A lady entered, followed by a smart maid.

An elderly lady, wrapped in a shawl.

"Shut that window, Marie!" she said peevishly. "The night air is——"

Honor stayed to hear no more, but scuttled (no other word expresses it) across the railing on to her own balcony and stood there with throbbing heart. A mistake! she was always making mistakes. Perhaps she would better go to bed. And yet—the night was so heavenly! and there was another balcony on the right— Courage then, faint heart! once more!

Once more it was. Again Honor found herself looking into a room like her own; but this time—oh, joy! oh, wonder of good fortune!—at the window, looking sadly out into the night, stood the dark-eyed girl.

A tap; a whisper: "Nella!"

The girl started, and looked about her in terror.

"It is I! fear not! Honor Bright, your friend, Nella. Come out! it is so wonderful. Hush! give me your hand—so!"

Nella, timid and frightened, would have hung back, but Honor with a vigorous pull drew her out on the balcony.

"Look!" she whispered. "See how beautiful! Two heavens, do you see? Oh, Nella,

to find you! what joy! what happiness! Do you also rejoice to see me, yes? Say it then, chérie!"

"Hush!" said Nella. "I am afraid someone will hear us. My father——"

"Nobody will see, nobody will hear us!" cried Honor. "We are alone with the night; the glorious night, Nella! Tell me! have you thought of me to-day? I have thought of you, but constantly. We are to stay two days only in this hotel, till Friday. Then we go to a house; Heathcote it calls itself; a house of beauty, Miss Folly says; but how to remove myself from thee, Nella? But we will meet somehow, n'est-ce pas? A daily rendezvous! we will—we must arrange it. Tell me what you have done to-day! I burn to hear!"

Nella had spent most of the day in her room, it appeared. Her stepfather had visits to make, and had left her to herself. She was glad, for her head ached after that terrible time. She had slept a little; had sat here

on the balcony; otherwise, she had done nothing.

"I never do much!" she said listlessly. "There isn't anything to do. Yes, I thought of you, and I like you very much, but I don't see how we can meet. Father doesn't like me to speak to people."

"Ah!" cried Honor. "The old—hush! Nella, the truth! He is not your own father; do you love him?"

"No! but I have to do what he bids me."

"No! but no!" Honor flamed out. "If he were thy own father, Nella, I were dumb, no word could be torn from me; but—I have heard him speak to thee, cherished one. It was brutal, his speech. I regard him with horror. Briefly, a monster! Before a monster, one escapes, not so? One does one's possible to avoid him. So does always the Princess in the story, till the Prince comes. Ah! the Prince! catastrophe that I was born a girl. I can do so little. But—we may find

him in this place of wonders. Think, Nella! if we should find a Prince; if he should spring to rescue thee, his mantle glittering on the rocks, as says le poète Tennyson; you love Tennyson, Nella? Me, I adore him! Ainsi —thus—if the Prince should come here. under this balcony. Look! he holds out his arms; his eyes glow in the moonlight, n'est-ce pas? He whispers, 'My own! how shall I ascend to thee?' And then—then, Nella, you let down your hair, like Rapunzel, you know, and he climbs up by it. I am sure he could, you have such splendid hair. And then—how then? I weary thee, my friend?"

She paused, for Nella was yawning politely behind her hand.

"Excuse me!" she said. "I am so tired, and I am sure it must be late, and I don't know what you are talking about, Honor."

It was late, but not too late for a few hurried lines in the Journal.

"She sleeps!" wrote Honor. "My

friend sleeps, like the Belle au Bois Dormant. I watch over her, protecting her from danger. Ah! her mind also sleeps, this cherished one. She does not know, she does not understand. She has never had a friend, pauvrette! She shall learn the value of a heart devoted, beating for her alone—saving duty and affection to these kind ladies, other thing entirely. She shall learn, soon! now, patience, silence! Sleep with the moon, sweet star!"

Honor thought this last sentence so lovely that she repeated it several times, and so fell asleep.

## CHAPTER IX

## HEATHCOTE

A long white house, standing at the end of a brick pathway bordered by flowering shrubs; a lawn shaded by a feathery casuarina tree; flowerbeds glowing with scarlet, purple, and gold; little steps leading up to a terrace, little steps leading down to a summerhouse: the whole space enclosed by white coral walls overgrown with jasmine and hibiscus. The front windows of the house opened on the garden; at the back, the land fell away in gracious curves, to where the sea glittered blue in the distance. This was Heathcote.

"The prettiest house in Bermuda!" said Mrs. Damian again. "My Professor said so, and he knew what he was talking about. Not the finest house, you understand, nor the largest, nor the oldest; just the prettiest." She cast a glance of satisfaction about the drawing room where she sat: a long, low room, with walls and ceiling of snowy white, and great brown rafters. The hangings and cushions were of English chintz, displaying tulips of every gay color on a ground of creamy white; the furniture was of fine old mahogany. At one end was a quaint little fireplace, set in the thickness of the wall.

"We shall do very well here!" the old lady went on. "This room suits me; it is restful. You have done well, Folly. Honor, how do you like it?"

Honor, clasping her hands, declared that the house was "all that there was" of gracious and enchanting. The dining room was adorable, the little chambers to sleep—bedrooms? She demanded pardon!—infinitely coquettish.

"How then? Again an error, my aunt?" Mrs. Damian explained.

"'Charming' would be better in this sense. But, Honor, if you expend all your adjectives on the house, you will have none left for the garden. Go and explore the premises—I remember them well—and report at tea-time. There should be a hammock under the great casuarina tree."

There was a hammock. Honor swung in it for a few minutes, looking up into the feathery green tent above her. What a wonderful tree! depth upon depth of soft green clouds; what rapture to be a bird, to fly, to sing, to live in a casuarina tree! ah!

Honor tried to imagine how it would feel to be a bird, and got as far as establishing herself in a nest with five blue eggs, and pouring out a song which should combine the qualities of skylark, nightingale, and catbird. Then she remembered how ugly young birds were, and how Vivette had told her that the mother bird was obliged to furnish three miles of worms for each nestling. "Trois lieues, ma chère; parole d'honneur!" Margoton's sister, who reared bullfinches to sell, had told her. Dis-

missing ornithological aspirations, Honor flitted about the lawn and garden, stooping here to caress a splendid lily, there to lift a trailing branch set thick with tiny crimson roses. Oh, pleasant place! If only Nella were here to enjoy it with her! What was Nella doing now? Was the Ogre brutalifying her, pauvrette?

Here Honor fell down two little unsuspected steps and, rounding the corner of the house, found herself on another lovely little enclosed lawn. On the right was a shed or carriage house; on the left the house, with oh! what a curious little door! a bright, green door, no higher than her own head, with a brass handle and knocker that shone like gold. It stood ajar; there could be no harm in looking in; her aunt had bidden her explore. She opened the door, and saw within a room, or rather, two tiny rooms, partly divided by a great brick chimney. The vaulted ceiling was low; she could barely stand upright; the

walls were of brick, brightly whitewashed. It was furnished—what a strange place! someone live here? There was no light save that from the door, but Honor saw evident signs of occupation. There were two or three low stools, made of cedar wood with the bark left on; a small table, the top planed to something approaching smoothness; in one corner, what looked like some old rugs folded into the likeness of a couch. In another corner something bright glimmered. Kneeling down, Honor found a rack holding tin plates, dishes and spoons, all shining like silver. Close by, in a tiny cupboard, was part of a loaf of raisin bread, and a pot of jam. On the cupboard door was an inscription, which she made out with some difficulty.

"By order of the Band. Nobody touch without order from the Chief."

Wondering more and more, Honor crept round the projecting chimney into the second or inner room. Here, four piles of fragrant cedar-boughs were neatly disposed on the floor; beds, evidently! No other furniture here, but the white walls were adorned with green twigs, with clusters of pine-cones, and here and there a bird's nest carefully secured. In the dimmest corner were three paper bags, closely tied, and labeled, respectively, "Gold," "Pearls," and "Preshus Stones."

Honor's fancy kindled, flamed high. A play place! it was evidently a play place; of this family, doubtless, who had left the house the day before. The children had not had time to dismantle it; had left their cherished possessions. Ah! unhappy ones! what delight they must have had here. How she would have loved to play with them; when she was a child, bien entendu! Of course, now— Ah! it would be adorable to be a child, with other children, in a place like this. If Nella loved the make-believe—but Honor feared this would not be the case. Fifteen

years seemed very old to her, as she crept out of the low doorway.

As she emerged into the light, she raised her eyes—and stood transfixed. The garden wall was directly opposite her, and above the wall three heads appeared, three pairs of eyes stared fixedly at her. The heads were black and tousled; the eyes were dark and bright. The intensity of their gaze kept Honor spellbound for a moment. Before she could move or speak, one of the heads, the largest, disappeared, to reappear in company with two brown, sinewy hands which grasped the coping of the wall vigorously. The next instant a boy came flying over, alighted on his head, and turning a handspring came uppermost and advanced toward Honor, rather out of breath, but apparently quite at his ease.

"I say!" he began in a pleasant voice. "We're awfully sorry! We meant to have it all cleared out; we had no idea you were coming so soon. Please excuse us, won't you?"

Now Honor had never known any boys, except her friend Zitli, the lame Swiss woodcarver. She felt all the embarrassment that the other did not, and was painfully aware of blushing hot and scarlet.

"But assuredly!" she stammered. "We just arrive, in this hour even. It is that we would not disturb anyone. You—it is your place, this?"

She waved her hand toward the green door. "Well! not ours, of course. We live over yonder at Merrymount." He nodded toward another house, glimmering white among trees and shrubs. "But the Ansons didn't mind, you see, and we have always carried on as if it was ours. It's Derncleugh, you see." His voice took a confidential tone. "We are gipsies, smugglers, wreckers, that kind of thing. Come on, chaps!" he added, turning to the wall. "Nobody's going to bite you!"

No answer was returned. "They've gone! silly asses! my young brothers. You'll

see them soon enough; that is, if you don't mind? The Ansons have always been so awfully decent about our coming over—" he paused.

"Oh, but surely! surely!" cried Honor, eagerly. "My aunt, I know, will be also enor-r-mousely decent—" ("awfully" was not permitted at *Pension Madeleine*)—"Mrs. Damian, my guardian; it is she who takes the house; I am but her ward; Honor Bright is my name—at your service!" she added politely, as she had been taught.

For the first time the boy seemed to share her embarrassment.

"Oh, I say!" he murmured. "Fancy my never telling you my name! I'm Robert Holiday—Robin, they call me; and the others are Tim and Algernon."

"Three!" said Honor. "But—pardon! there are four couches in the *dormitoir*—the bedroom, not so?"

"Of course! that was Johnny Anson, but

he's gone now. He was Dirk Hatteraick, because it was his house, of course, but now I take over and lead the Band. Mary Anson—that's his sister—used to do 'Meg Merrilies' sometimes for us. She was grown up, of course, and it was awfully decent of her. She had black hair, of course, and eyes, and all that, and was tall—"

Master Holiday stopped short. Hitherto all had been "of course" to him, but something in Honor's look gave him pause.

"You've read 'Guy Mannering,' of course?" he asked.

Poor Honor! Sœur Séraphine had never quite been able to cope with the Scottish tales of "Ze Vizar' of ze Nort'." The girls had read "Waverley," which they found dull, and had thrilled over "Kenilworth," "Quentin Durward," and "The Talisman"; but no one at Pension Madeleine had ever opened "Guy Mannering"—except Patricia Desmond, who read everything. Honor felt herself blush-

ing again—oh! how she hated it!—as she confessed that she had not read the book.

"Oh! I say! I think you'd like it awfully; it simply is the most frightfully ripping snorter that ever was written. So you see—well, of course you don't now, but you will when you've read it—we call this place—" he nodded toward the green door—"the Kaim of Derncleugh, and we keep our Treasure there. Perhaps you saw the bags?"

He looked up inquiringly, and Honor nodded eagerly.

"Gold, Pearls, and Precious Stones; oh yes! but naturally I did not look within."

Robin looked rather sheepish.

"Of course it's all make believe!" he said, half apologetically. "But there are some really ripping bits of coral in those bags. Dad says they are really worth something. I'll show them to you some time, if you like. The point is—of course we meant to take all the things away, but—" he scanned Honor's

glowing face, and went on slowly—"it's awfully decent of you to look like that, as if you were interested—do you suppose—you don't suppose—Mrs. Damian would let us stay on there, if we were *frightfully* quiet and made no disturbance? Of course, smugglers can't make a noise!"

Honor glowed responsive.

"But assuredly she would! ass-sure-ed-ley! She is of a fancy—how shall I say? wholly picturesque, my Aunt Damian." She turned, with a quick gesture. "Come to her!" she cried. "At the instant even!—I present you! She—at the good hour! she will have read 'Guy Mannering'; she has read all books."

Robin Holiday demurred; she might think it cheeky; but Honor bore down his doubts.

"At the instant even!" she repeated. "She sits at this moment in the salon. Come!"

Honor was right. Mrs. Damian had read "Guy Mannering," knew it by heart. This

was Dirk Hatteraick, was it? She eyed the boy keenly over her spectacles.

"You are one of the greatest rascals that ever went unhanged!" she said severely. "I suppose you are aware of that?"

The boy returned her gaze with an intent look; then a blissful grin stole over his face, his hands slipped easily into his pockets, and one leg curled itself comfortably round the other.

"I am Harry Bertram, too!" he explained.
"Of course there are only three of us, now Anson is gone, and we have to double up."

"How about Glossin?" asked Mrs. Damian. Robin looked grave.

"Of course nobody wants to be Glossin," he admitted, "so we draw lots when he has to come in, you see."

"I see!" Mrs. Damian nodded comprehension. "Well! and you have made Poky Hole into the Kaim of Derncleugh, eh? And you want to do your smuggling there?"

"If you wouldn't mind!" Robin's voice was respectfully eager. "We—we'd be most frightfully obliged; it would be perfectly ripping, if we could; you see—I wish you'd come and see it!" he cried with a sudden glow. "It really is a rip snorter of a place."

"My dear!" Mrs. Damian swooped upon him. "I played there before you were born, or your father either. I visited in Bermuda when I was a child. Of course I'll come, but not to-day. Don't set the house on fire, and don't make stinks. And when Meg Merrilies has to come on the stage, why—" she gave Honor a quizzical glance—"you'd better call on me. Honor here is the wrong color."

"Oh, I say!" cried Rob Holiday.

## CHAPTER X

## THE FIRST PICNIC

"Honor," said Mrs. Damian, "I have an invitation for you."

"An invitation, Aunt Damian? How kind of—of whom is it kind?"

"Mrs. Holiday of Merrymount, mother of that nice boy, Dirk Hatteraick. My dear! what a lovely woman! She called yesterday. Mr. Holiday knew my Professor, but I never met her before. She is having a picnic on the beach this afternoon; a tea-picnic; and you and Folly are to go."

Honor clasped her hands.

"Oh, Aunt Damian! how delightful. That beautiful lady with dark eyes? How good! how kind! Do we make sandwiches? I fly!"

"You make sandwiches. Miss Folly has begun on them already. Wait!" as Honor was flying out of the room. "Hand me my knitting-bag, will you? And—let me see! Take the dictionary there—the Concise Oxford, red and fat; on that shelf!—and look out—" Mrs. Damian spoke slowly and deliberately, as if considering—"look up 'sesquipedalian' and read me out the meaning."

Very round-eyed, but always obedient, Honor complied.

"Sit down!" said her aunt calmly. "Take a long breath; now, child!"

"'One and a half feet long; cumbrous and pedantic'—" Honor paused and looked up in utter bewilderment. "My aunt! but—sandwiches?"

Mrs. Damian gave her little dry laugh.

"My dear! I chose the word at random. I merely wanted you to quiet down a little. Sandwiches require calm, and you were going to take them like a cavalry charge. A pina-

fore—you have a pinafore?—a sharp knife, a steady hand, and common-sense. Put the dictionary away—thank you! That will do."

A much-subdued Honor, pinafore-clad, sought the dining room, where Miss Folly was beating ham and chicken together to a smooth mousse.

"Ah!" cried Honor. "I am desolated, Miss Folly. You have done all; I have not helped, and I love so to help."

"On the contrary, you are just in time, my dear. Here is the bread all cut; spread the slices first with butter, not too thick! a little thicker than that—so! just right!" Now——"

Never were such sandwiches, Honor declared, since the first ham was boiled. She was allowed two, "just to make sure that they were right." Then they were made into neat little packets with paraffin paper tucked snugly in at the ends; bestowed in a basket with sundry delectable little heart-shaped cakes; and

soon the two friends were making their way down the hill toward the beach. Such a pleasant way! The walls on either side of the white coral road were covered with vines; masses of morning-glory, with splendid purpleblue blossoms three inches across; masses of white-starred, fragrant jasmine; behind the walls, on one hand a cedar-dotted pasture, on the other creamy-white houses set in trim gardens ablaze with color. A little further, and they struck into a shadowy lane, which ended in a stretch of sand dunes overgrown with sea lavender and the curious "grape tree," whose green clusters were already beginning to take on a rosy tinge. The dunes rose and fell in soft waves and hummocks; beyond them, the sea glittered blue, the surf broke in snowy thunder. Honor was too thrilled to speak; she could only utter little, inarticulate "oh's" and "ah's." Miss Folly glanced at her, and nodded appreciation.

"Nothing like it, is there?" she said.

"Hark! I hear voices. The party must be near."

At that moment a round black object appeared above a sand hummock, and proved to be the head of Robin Holiday.

"How do?" he cried. "They sent me to show you the way; it's close by. Let me take the basket!"

"I say!" he added in an undertone, as they scrambled over the hummocks, their feet slipping and sliding in the creamy coral sand. "Do I call you 'Miss Bright,' or——"

"But no! Call me 'Honor,' please!"
The boy looked relieved.

"Then that's all right! And you call me Rob or Robin, whichever you like best. I hate this Miss and Mistering, don't you? Silly asses!"

"Or—if I called you 'Dirk'?" suggested Honor, who was now half-way through "Guy Mannering" and preferred it to food or sleep.

"Not on your life!" muttered the villain

with a really quite terrifying gleam of his dark eyes. "Stow the gab! We don't speak of it in public, of course."

Honor murmured an apology, and followed the smuggler in discreet silence.

A little dell or dingle opened before them, shaded by a wide-branching cedar. A white cloth was spread on the ground, and round it was gathered a cheerful group, ladies in light dresses and shady hats, gentlemen in white linen suits, bare-legged boys and little girls in short frocks. Some were unpacking baskets, others gathering cedar twigs to build a fire. Honor hung back, overcome with shyness; even self-possessed Martha Folly paused a moment, as if uncertain; but Rob Holiday waved them onward joyously.

"Here they are, Mum!" he cried. "This way, Honor. Here's Mother."

Mrs. Holiday (whom Honor privately thought the most beautiful lady she had ever seen), came forward with outstretched hand and cordial greeting. They were just in time, she said. They should sit here, against this rock, where the rug was spread.

"Sandwiches? Delightful! I was just wishing I had brought more."

One and another was introduced to "our new neighbors at Heathcote"; Miss Vivian, an extremely pretty and vivacious little lady, declared that Miss Folly looked so capable, she must and should help her with the tea.

"Very well!" said Mrs. Holiday. "Then Honor Bright shall pour the lemonade, and Robin shall help her."

All were so friendly, so gay, so thoroughly at home, that Honor forgot her shyness and was soon pouring lemonade with right good will. Robin, propped on his elbows, his heels elevated above his head, now proffered help or advice, now gave information about the other guests.

"Aunt Lena—that's Miss Vivian, of course—is a brick; she's Mum's sister, and so is

Aunt Zoe over there, Mrs. Russell. Of course her children are all girls, so they don't count particularly——"

"Thank you!" said Honor, with a flash of mirthful blue eyes.

"Oh, I say! of course I didn't mean that! I mean little girls, you know; that's the oldest one over there in pink, and she's only six. Ripping kid, and all that, but you know what I mean. Those are the Blessingtons—that's Colonel Blessington carving the ham. The tow-headed chap is Billy Blessington. He wants us to take him into the Band in Anson's place, and we are thinking of it."

"You like him? He looks a pleasant boy."

"He's all right, of course, but a nervous kind of chap; jumps when you fire a pistol, that kind of thing. He screamed right out once when I put a frog down his neck. Rather a worm in that way, but all right, of course, and he wants awfully to join. You see," he added gravely, "of course we have to

be frightfully careful whom we let in. You want just the right kind of chap, or else-or else he's the wrong kind—you see. Of course on the other hand, we need another chap, and it's a mighty good thing to have one outside the family. Tim and Al are apt to get frightfully cocky when they have things their own way, and though I'm the Captain and all that, of course—well! we shall decide at the next meeting, and probably we'll take him in. He's frightfully keen on it, of course, and there are lots of worst chaps. Hullo! who are these toffs? Hotel people, I'll bet. Wonder who asked them! Not Mum, I'll say."

Honor looked up. Two newcomers were exchanging greetings with Mrs. Holiday: a lady of uncertain age, very richly dressed, and a tall, distinguished-looking elderly man. Honor started violently, as her eyes fell on him. The Ogre! Nella's brutal stepfather! Where was Nella? She looked round eagerly, but no dark-eyed girl was in sight. The lady,

who was addressed as Mrs. Champion, was talking rapidly in a high, clear voice.

"I hope we don't intrude! We called at Merrymount and were told you were here; we could not resist a peep at a Bermuda picnic—so charming! You know Sir Hubert Cranston, of course?"

"I have met Sir Hubert Cranston!" Mrs. Holiday's sweet voice lacked its usual cordial ring.

Rob looked up quickly. The tall man was bowing low.

"Not to know Mrs. Holiday," he said gallantly, "would be not to know Bermuda, and I should be loath to admit such ignorance. We have met several times, I think."

"And your stepdaughter, Sir Hubert?" asked Mrs. Holiday. "I am sorry you did not bring her with you."

The tall man waved his hand gracefully.

"The poor child!" he said in a regretful tone. "My poor little Nella! She is—un-

happily—not in condition for gayety at present. A fragile flower, dear lady, extremely fragile; and moody. Solitude—quiet—in short, retirement is recommended for her. Most unfortunate! Otherwise it would be a joy to see her take part in such delightful festivities as—ha! h'm!" He stopped abruptly.

His glance, roaming round the circle, chanced to fall on Honor, who was gazing at him with all her indignant soul in her eyes. The next instant her eyes had dropped, and the hot color flooded over cheek and brow. Her hand trembled so that she nearly dropped the glass she was filling.

"I say!" murmured Robin Holiday. "What's up? The old toff seems to make you most frightfully ill, what?"

"Hush! Don't speak to me, please!"

Honor's eyes filled with angry tears, but she forced them back, and compelled herself to attend to her task. Meantime the tall man was looking curiously at her, as if trying to place her in his memory.

"Who is the pretty, savage-looking child pouring lemonade?" he asked his companion in a low tone. "I have seen her somewhere. She looked at me like daggers, begad! 'Straordinary-looking child. Have you ever seen her before?"

Mrs. Champion glanced carelessly at Honor.

"Never!" she said. "Looks like an American. There is Mr. Blessington, whom you wanted to see."

They strolled off toward another group. Honor and Rob, looking after the pair, thought that nobody at the picnic seemed specially delighted to see them. It was as if a discordant note had been struck in the pleasant harmony of the friendly meeting. Possibly they felt this themselves, for after ten minutes of desultory chat, the lady announced that they positively must go on. Difficult to tear them-

selves away, but they were due at a tea in Hamilton, and dining with friends at the Island House.

"Bermuda is so gay!" laughed Mrs. Champion. "Hubert and I are positively deluged with invitations. Good-by, all you charming people. I wish we were staying in Paget, don't you, Hubert? It is so deliciously out of the world; so restful, don't you know, after Hamilton!"

Sir Hubert Cranston made his adieux gracefully, bowing over Mrs. Holiday's hand and saluting the rest of the company with a halfmilitary wave. He cast a sharp glance at Honor and seemed for an instant on the point of asking Mrs. Holiday some question, but changed his mind and withdrew.

A silence followed their departure. Presently someone was heard to murmur something about Egypt being glad—Mrs. Holiday struck in at once with cheerful decision.

"Let us have a charade!" she said.

"Everybody seems to have finished, and there is still plenty of light. Lena," nodding to Miss Vivian, "you shall lead one side, and Mr. Blessington the other. Pick up and put away, and then choose sides!"

"Listen!" whispered Honor to Robin Holiday, as they were putting up the glasses and spoons. "How far is it from Heathcote to the Hotel Bel Air?"

"About half a mile! Why?"

"And the way? Down the hill on the other side, not so? Can I find the way easily, in the night?"

Robin stared at her.

"Of course!" he said. "If you *know* the way. There are two or three turns, of course. Why?"

"I must go there, this night. Hush! listen! I can trust you to be silent?"

"Ra-ther! What's up? A lark?"

The boy's eyes shone, and he looked eagerly at her.

"My friend, Nella Castiglione, is there, alone, in sorrow and misery. That man—Sir Hubert Cranston—is her stepfather. He is a brute! If you could hear him speak to her! and here, so polite, so all that is charming—ah! he is an ogre, that one. Listen! He dines to-night at another hotel; you heard him say it. I fly to my friend. Late, when all is still—I must not disturb my guardian, who is of great age, and frail as a leaf—I open my window, I slip out. I run down the hill. There—I turn—which way?"

Rob Holiday looked at her doubtfully for a moment; then——

"Look here!" he said decidedly. "I'll go with you!" and as Honor shook her head vehemently, "Don't be a sill— I mean, listen to me! You can't go alone; you'd be sure to take the wrong turn, and—and anyway, you can't; it isn't done. I'd love to go. I'll come to the gate and whistle, 'God Save the King'; what time?"

Honor considered, her flame of resolve quieting down meantime to a steady glow. Finally she nodded.

"Soit!" she said. "I thank you, Robin; you are very friendly. Shall we be friends, yes?"

"Oh, I say! rather!" cried Robin eagerly. He thought Honor a wonderful sport, for a girl.

"Then—my aunt retires—we all retire at nine. At half-past, be at the gate, but do not whistle; all must be silent as the grave. Yet a signal is necessary——"

"I'll peep like a tree-toad!" said the boy hopefully. "I can do it like—like smoke! You'd never know it wasn't a real one. Three peeps: like this!"

He made a low, clear sound under his breath.

"Louder than that, but you see it's the real thing. Of course it's pretty late—I'm supposed to be in bed before nine—but if

Mother knew, she'd be on, I'm sure she would."

"Honor, you are on my side!" called Miss Vivian. "We go out first; come!"

# CHAPTER XI

## FRIENDSHIP'S ESCAPADE

Half-past nine of a clear, moonless night. The stars blazed like lamps in the dark velvet of the sky; a faint breeze whispered in the great casuarina tree; somewhere in the distance a dog barked incessantly; but these sounds seemed only to accentuate the silence that hung heavy over Heathcote. To one pair of eager ears, it seemed as if the stillness would never be broken. Two whole minutes since the clock struck half past! Had Robin forsaken her? Had he been detained, perhaps discovered, imprisoned—

Hark! a sound from where the garden gate glimmered white in the starlight. "Peep!" again, twice repeated, clear and insistent. "Peep! peep!"

Honor slipped quietly from her window,

which was directly over the Smugglers' Den. (Heathcote was a one-story house, but the Den was on a lower level, attained by the steps down which Honor had fallen when she first discovered it.) She dared not cross the front lawn, much less go down the path, lest Miss Folly be still awake, and—possibly, though improbably—looking out of her window, which commanded both. The wall was lined with shrubs, some as tall as Honor herself, others waist-high. It was only to steal across the little green space, to slip in behind the shrubs, and so creep round the garden to the gate. This sounded easy enough; but the bushes grew thick, and some of them had thorns. Now upright, now on hands and knees, Honor made her way along; it was a painful progress. Branches slapped her in the face; twigs snapped into her eyes, half blinding her; thorns pricked her, caught her clothes, pulled her back. The way seemed endless; was it a mile round the garden? At

length, tattered, disheveled, and breathless, she emerged at the gate, and looked eagerly round. A dark figure rose from the bank beyond.

"Hagel und wetter!" muttered a voice. "I thought all was off. You didn't answer the signal. Have you brought a glim?"

"A glim?" repeated Honor, puzzled.

"A light! I knew you wouldn't!" The speaker produced triumphantly a small dark lantern smelling abominably of rancid oil, and turned its dim ray on the road before them. "Come on!" he whispered. "It's late enough as it is. We'll take the short cut by the tribe road. I don't suppose you can run?"

This was no safe remark to make to the prize runner of *Pension Madeleine*. For all reply, Honor, like the Tusculan Mamilius, "tossed her golden crest," and shot off like an arrow down the road. For an instant, Robin Holiday stood amazed; then he followed at his best speed. Of course she had got the start,

but he would pick her up in half a second. Frightfully rum to see a girl run at all—much more to see her run in good form. Of course she couldn't keep it up; he would overhaul her in another second—

It was several minutes later when he gasped, "Honor! stop! Turn here!"

Honor stopped, and he came racing up to her. At this moment a young man passed them on a bicycle, going in the opposite direction. He was riding rapidly, and did not slacken his pace, but Honor felt rather than saw the keen glance of two dark eyes.

"Hagel und wetter!" said the boy under his breath. "I hope he didn't spot me."

"Who was it? An officer?"

"My brother!" said Robin, briefly. "He—well, he was riding a pretty good clip; perhaps he didn't. Anyhow he wouldn't know you. I say!" he added, rather ruefully; "you can't half run, can you? Where on earth did you pick up your form? I never

saw a girl before that could run any more than a—I mean—well, I'll say you do run rippingly."

"We learned it at *Pension Madeleine*. I

—I won the prize last year, the *Pommes*d'Atalante."

A wave of homesickness flowed over Honor, almost choking her. Ah! so short time ago, and now gone forever! She recalled the day of the race: the dear, familiar garden, the broad track with all the friendly, eager faces clustering on either side, she and Patricia speeding down the course, side by side, neck and neck—till that stumble at the end—was it a real stumble, or a trick? Honor would never know-checked Patricia and gave the prize to her, Honor Bright. Ah! how they shouted, all the girls là-bas! "Moriole! Moriole! Vive la Moriole!" It was her school name, beloved far-oh, so far beyond her own! The tears were brimming in Honor's eyes; for the moment, she had forgotten where she was, whither she was going.

"Here's the tribe road!" said Robin Holiday.

"We'd better walk here; it's rather steep."

They turned into a narrow lane, with walls of coral rock rising high above their heads, thickly overgrown with maidenhair and other delicate ferns; it plunged steeply down through thickets of oleander and scarlet sage.

"You call this—what? A tribe road? How then? There are savages here?"

Rob Holiday repelled the idea indignantly. Savages? Of course not! There wasn't anybody here at all till—till people came, of course. His sixth great-grandfather was one of the first settlers; there was nothing on the island but pigs when they came, and of course no one knew where they came from—the pigs—and so there you were. Why tribe road, then? He didn't know; that was what they were called; he would ask Mummy; she knew all about everything.

"Now—" they reached the bottom of the hills and turned into a broad road—"we're getting warm. That's the Bel Air over there, among those trees. Do you know where your friend's window is?"

"It gives on the harbor: the second story. It has a balcony. I shall know it."

"They all have balconies," said Rob. "Come on!"

Keeping in the shadow, they stole noiselessly round to the harbor front of the hotel, and looked up.

"The second story!" whispered Honor.

"Yes!" Robin Holiday nodded. "That's all very well, but—hagel und wetter! there are one, two—four—six—ten windows, all with balconies exactly alike. Of course I can climb up and look in at all of them, but it would be frightfully cheeky, and then—you see, I don't know your friend by sight."

"I can climb up—I think!" Honor eyed the white wall rather doubtfully. "But, as you

say—to look in would be—chicky, you call it? What to do? Hold! I have it. Can you whistle, Robin? Whistle a tune, I mean?"

"Rather! What tune?"

"The bugle played it, on the steamer, before dinner. She—my friend—was so ill, I am not sure if she noticed, but—yes! so loud it sounded, so near her room, she could not escape it. A song about beef, my aunt said. Listen!" She hummed the air under her breath.

"Oh, rather! 'The Roast Beef of Old England!' Ripping tune, what? I can whistle it like one o'clock."

It was very still on the water-front. The windows of the hotel were for the most part brightly lighted. Now and again a figure passed before one; here and there someone was sitting in one of the little balconies, enjoying the beauty of the night. The two adventurers gazed eagerly upward, as the notes

of the old tune rang out softly yet clearly on the still air.

"Oh, the roast beef of Old England!

And oh, the old English roast beef!"

Robin whistled it through, and paused; then, after an interval, whistled it again, and yet again. Honor's heart was sinking lower and lower. Nella did not hear; or if she heard, did not understand. Robin Holiday looked at her, and shook his head.

"Nix, I'm afraid!" he whispered. "Any use to try again?"

"Oh, hush!" cried Honor, under her breath.
"Oh, look, Robin! the fourth window from the left. It is she; it is Nella. I can swear to it."

A slender, white-clad figure came out on the fourth balcony from the left; a pale face looked down.

"Nella! It is I, Honor, your friend. Can you come down, or shall I climb up to you?"

"Hush! no! wait, and I will come down."

Nella vanished, and Honor, her heart beating high, turned to her companion.

"You have seen her! Is she not lovely? Does it not rend your heart to think of such a creature suffering?"

Robin kicked a pebble thoughtfully, his hands in his pockets.

"I couldn't really see her, you know. Of course, it's frightfully tough, if the old toff is such a worm as you think. I don't know much about rending hearts and all that, but I'd jolly well like to punch his head."

"Hush! She comes!"

A door on the ground floor opened, and Nella Castiglione came out, a dark mantle over her white dress.

"Nella, my own!" Honor clasped her in a tender embrace. "At last I see thee! You have been ill, unhappy, yes? I have written twice, but no word from you."

Nella shook her head.

"I told you it was no use!" she said in her listless little voice. "I could not write: I had no money for stamps. Yes, I got your letters. Yes, I was glad to get them, but I wish you wouldn't, please. You'd much better let me alone. Who is that?"

Honor beckoned to Robin, who had been hanging back in the shadow, and who now came forward sheepishly.

"This is Robin Holiday!" she announced. "He guided me here; he is my friend, too, and will be yours, not so, Robin?"

"Righto!" muttered Rob. "Glad to meet you!"

Nella clasped and unclasped her hands nervously, looking anxiously round her the while.

"Oh, thank you!" she said. "But my step-father does not allow me to make acquaint-ances. Don't you see," she broke out, turning to Honor, "that if he knew—if he found out—he would be angry; very angry! And

he frightens me so! Oh, do go now, Honor! He may come and find you here, and then—" she shivered.

Honor, her eyes blazing in the dark, again threw her arms round the trembling girl.

"He will not come! He is at a dinnerparty. Listen, Nella! Who is the lady who goes with him?"

"His sister, Mrs. Champion. Where have you seen them?"

Honor told briefly of the meeting at the picnic.

"I did not like the lady!" she said. "I thought her a false-face. You do not love her, Nella?"

"I hate her!" said Nella, briefly, and her listless face woke suddenly into life and passion. "I must obey Sir Hubert," she cried. "He is my stepfather, and my mother left me in his care. Ah! my mother! if she had known! But Mrs. Champion is a stranger, and I will not obey her. Rather will I die!"

"Noble Nella! Resist to the death! What does she try to make you do?"

"She wants me to mend her clothes, to wash her *chiffons*, to wait upon her as if I were her maid. I am not her maid! I will raise no finger for her. Rather will I die!" the girl repeated, her sudden passion giving way to sullen doggedness. "I shall die, too. I expect it, soon."

"Nella! my cherished one! You are ill? Where is the pain? Quickly tell me!"

There was no special pain, it appeared. Only, there was no pleasure in living, and Nella preferred to die. Here Robin Holiday, who had been listening with feelings more and more disturbed, broke in awkwardly.

"I say! It's an awful shame, and I'd do anything I could to help, but—I expect we'd better be going, Honor: unless there is something we could do, now."

"Yes! yes!" chimed in Nella. "Go now, please! I must go back."

Honor was fumbling at her throat. She drew out a small object and held it out to Nella.

"Take it!" she said. "It is an amulet, a talisman. Wear it for me!"

Nella examined the object curiously, and Robin Holiday looked over her shoulder. It was a flat, smooth pebble of milk-white quartz, roughly heart-shaped. On it was written in a cramped, schoolgirl hand, "Quand même!" At one end was a hole, through which a ribbon was passed. It was the parting gift, Honor explained hastily, of one of her schoolmates, Stephanie, the friend who loved her best. The pebble was taken from the path of white gravel where so often they had walked together. Stephanie was un peu romanesque, but what would you?

"'Quand même!' even if! The sentiment was beautiful, not so? Wear it for my sake!" Honor passed the ribbon round Nella's neck and tied it carefully. "Look at it every night,

and say to yourself, 'Quand même! Honor Bright is always there, ready to fly at a moment's notice.' Tiens! And—Nella—listen! If danger threatens, if the Ogre—I would say your stepfather—becomes more brutal than—than usual—send me this token! Find some messenger, a boy, a child, and send it to me. Heathcote is our home: it is in Paget. I shall—ah! but how I shall fly! And Robin will fly, too. Not so, Robin?"

Robin shrugged his shoulders with a whimsical smile.

"If I can keep up with you!" he said. "Flying isn't exactly my line, but I'll do my best."

Twenty minutes later, Robin Holiday, having duly escorted Honor to the gate of Heathcote, and waited till he saw her safely in at her window, made his way home to Merrymount, and, entering by a shed door which

he had carefully unfastened an hour before, stole softly to his own room. There was a light under the door, and Robin gave a soundless whistle. He had left no light. He entered. A tall young man was sitting on the bed, reading.

"Donner und blitzen!" muttered Robin.

The young man looked up.

"Well, young feller!" he said in cheerful, matter-of-fact tones. "Out with it! What have you been up to?"

Robin scowled and twisted himself about.

"You spotted me, then?" he inquired.

"Not being a mole, I did. Who was the little girl, and where were you going? No nonsense, Rob! This isn't the kind of thing we do, you know."

He spoke decidedly, though not unkindly.

"I know!" Robin seemed to consider. "Trouble is, I don't see how I can tell you, Hal. I—I'm bound, you see!"

"Bound? What do you mean by 'bound'?

I'll bind you fast enough, if you give me any cheek, I can tell you that."

"Of course! Bound to her—Honor Bright. That's her name. She's at Heathcote, you know, and she's a good sort. She was at the picnic this afternoon, and—" he broke off, and considered again. "I don't really see how I can tell you, Hal! Of course it was all right! I mean, I'm pretty sure Mum would approve and all that—at least, she would, if I could explain to her—but you see it's her affair—Honor's—and she's awfully keen on keeping it dark and all that, and—and, in short, how can I squeal and give her away?"

He looked anxiously at his brother, his face so full of honest anxiety that the latter relaxed his air of severity and returned the look with a very friendly one.

"Suppose you give Mum the chance of approving!" he suggested. "Go straight to her in the morning, make a clean breast of it, and

ask her advice. You needn't tell me anything—if you give me your word it is all right!" he added.

"Oh, right as rain!" Robin assured him eagerly. "She's a ripping good sort, and—my hat! you ought to see her run. You see—her friend was in trouble; there can't be any harm in my saying just that—and she wanted to console her, and didn't know the way, and—there! now I have squealed!"

He broke off in dismay, and looked at his brother with eyes as round as Honor's own. Hal Holiday broke into a laugh, and clapped him affectionately on the shoulder.

"Go to bed now, old top!" he advised.
"Go to sleep, and forget all about it! In the morning—we'll see!"

### CHAPTER XII

#### MRS. DAMIAN SPEAKS HER MIND

"Annabella, suppose we have it out!"

The drawing room at Creston was cool and shady. Mrs. Damian sat erect in a straight-backed chair, Mrs. Darrell reclined in a deeply-cushioned bergère; dark eyes and topazcolored ones met in a long, thoughtful look.

"Suppose we have it out!" repeated Mrs. Damian. "I have been here nearly three weeks, and I have no idea why I am here. You sent for me on the plea of illness. You are perfectly well, and as strong as a horse."

Mrs. Darrell shivered and murmured a protest.

"Strong as a horse! Your household is on an excellent footing; you have a pleasant circle of acquaintances—though I don't like Mrs. Darrell sighed, and moved a small screen, embroidered with gold cockatoos, so that her face was more in the shade.

"My dear Honor," she murmured, "you are so abrupt, and you misjudge me so, it is really hard for me to explain. You never understood the delicacy of my constitution, or my extreme sensitiveness. When I sent for you, I was having the most frightful palpitations; I thought each day might be my last. I was so weak that the effort of lifting my little finger exhausted me completely. I have regained a small, a very small measure of strength, but am still incapable of any exertion. The expenses of my illness have been enormous; this place—" she waved her hand round the stately, shadowy drawing room— "requires a fortune to run. I am really

seriously embarrassed, Honor, and I thought
—I hoped—I could count on your assistance."

"Ah!" Mrs. Damian leaned forward, her dark eyes very keen. "You want money from me!"

"If you like to put it so baldly; you never had any delicacy of feeling, Honor. Lionel used to say,——"

"Leave Lionel out of this, will you, Annabella?" The tone was low, but so fierce that the other shrank, and, drawing out her hand-kerchief, applied it to her eyes.

"He told you to be kind to me! You know he did. You are very, very cruel."

Mrs. Damian remained silent for some minutes; when she spoke, it was in her usual crisp, composed tones.

"I have no intention or desire of being unkind to you, Annabella," she said. "I will not give you money, because you have enough—or ought to have. Your income is large,

and you have only yourself to think of. If you have been spending too much, cut down your expenses! Give up a couple of servants, or a couple of gardeners. Have your hair woman once a week, instead of every day. Do you want me to go through your house-keeping books with you?"

That, it appeared, was the last thing Mrs. Darrell wanted. She required a sum of money at once, for a special purpose; she named a figure, at which Mrs. Damian opened her eyes wide.

"What upon earth—you haven't been speculating, have you, Annabella?"

Mrs. Darrell protested against such a vulgar word. She merely wished to invest; to invest a considerable sum. There was a wonderful opportunity, one which might never occur again. Her financial adviser—Mrs. Damian broke in impatiently.

"Your financial adviser? Who is that, pray?"

"Sir Hubert Cranston!" Mrs. Darrell bridled, and looked conscious.

"Sir Hubert Cranston!" repeated Mrs.

Damian in amazement.

"Sir Hubert has been extremely kind to me!" the lady explained. "He was my neighbor last year at Montclair, the next place to this. His wife died there, and now he has this wretched little stepdaughter hanging round his neck like a melancholy millstone, as he says. He is so witty! And so—he happened to know of this remarkable opportunity for investment—a gold mine in Bechuanaland—he is a large owner in it, and has offered to get me in on the ground floor, as he expresses it in his picturesque way. course ready money is what is needed. You have so much more money than you can possibly spend, Honor, I thought you might be willing to help me, if not for Lionel's sake, for your own. Nobody ever has enough money, of course, and by investing in thisthis wonderful mine, you might double your income as well as mine."

Mrs. Damian seemed to ponder this, her eyes following absently the movements of a parrot, hanging upside down in a gilded cage. At last:

"What has Hubert Cranston done with his wife's money?" she asked abruptly. "She had some, I know; she was an Oliphant; I knew her father, a fine fellow. What has he done with it?"

"It was left to the child! Most unjust! Of course Hubert is her guardian, and has charge of the income, but he cannot touch the principal. He says——"

Mrs. Damian interrupted her with a swoop.

"You call him Hubert? You are intimate with this man, Annabella? I think you will have to explain yourself," she added more calmly. "I know a good deal about Hubert Cranston."

Mrs. Darrell bridled and looked down.

"The name slipped out unawares!" she said with a conscious smile. "He—has become much interested in me, Honor, and—and I confess the interest is mutual. Hubert Cranston is the noblest of his sex! The woman would be happy indeed who could win—who has won—his affection and admiration."

Mrs. Damian gazed at her, apparently bereft of the power of speech.

"Annabella Darrell," she said at length, slowly and emphatically, "you are seventy years old!"

Mrs. Darrell tossed her head and smoothed her silken lap with hands that trembled slightly.

"No one would believe I was over fifty!" she said defiantly. "Hubert refuses to believe it. He calls me 'Fair and forty-four!' Of course I don't pretend to youth, but what Hubert calls the Golden Age of Middle Life—I'm sure I don't know why you should look at

me like that, Honor Damian! I haven't had so much happiness that you should grudge me a little."

She began to cry delicately into a lace handkerchief. Mrs. Damian rose and walked slowly up and down the room a couple of times, leaning on her ivory crutch stick. She stopped in front of her sister-in-law.

"Annabella," she said quietly, "one of us is losing her senses. Let me make sure which it is. Are you giving me to understand that it is your intention to marry Sir Hubert Cranston? Look at me! Put that ridiculous rag away, and look me in the eye!"

Apparently that was just what Mrs. Darrell could not do. She lifted her chin defiantly; her eyes, which had been bent modestly on the floor, crept up till they rested on the black pearl brooch at Mrs. Damian's throat; but there they stopped, as if conscious of the look that blazed in the dark eyes above.

"If—if matters can be arranged!" she

"How much money does he—do you want?" Mrs. Damian's tone was carefully even.

the money. Of course it would be greatly to

your advantage——"

"Fifty thousand dollars! Of course that is nothing for you——"

"Nothing at all!" dryly. "I spend more than that for hairpins every week. And if I do not advance this money—what then?"

Mrs. Darrell made a curious little motion with her hands, very like a displeased cat preparing to scratch.

"We should have to wait a little," she owned. "Hubert has had heavy losses. He is retrenching now in every possible way, living

at a horrid little hotel, denying himself every luxury; he is so wonderful!"

"And what about the child?"

"The child?" repeated Mrs. Darrell, looking up. "What child?"

"The girl: the stepdaughter, who owns the money. What is to become of her?"

Mrs. Darrell made a vague gesture of dismissal.

"She will go into a Sisterhood—if she lives. She has no constitution, Hubert says: a wretched little half-alive creature. He is sending her to a special school, where she will be trained for the Sisterhood. It is a very strict order; we shall have no trouble with her after she enters it."

"H'm! Have you ever seen her? Ever tried to do anything for the poor child?"

Mrs. Darrell sighed.

"You really seem unable to grasp the idea that I am an invalid, Honor!" she said peevishly. "I saw the girl once, and it depressed me for days. Such a little mope!
Emily Champion says she is perfectly selfish
—she never lifts a finger to help Emily, her
father's own sister——"

"Stepfather!" Mrs. Damian's tone was very crisp.

"Stepfather, of course. Thank goodness, she isn't his own child; she gives him quite trouble enough as it is. Emily has tried to do something with her, but she is perfectly unmanageable."

Mrs. Damian again pondered in silence. Presently the sound of wheels was heard outside and she rose.

"I am going, Annabella," she said, and her tone had a ring of finality; "but first, let me make myself entirely clear. I will not advance, or give, or lend you one halfpenny for any such purpose as you have in mind. I will not in any way countenance the—the monstrous proposition you have laid before me. On the contrary, I shall take every means in

my power to—to confound the politics, and frustrate the knavish tricks, of Hubert Cranston. You ridiculous old creature," she cried, flaming out into sudden passion, "do you expect me to sit still and see my brother's widow bamboozled, probably ruined, by a clever trickster, who for years has used his title and his good looks to cover his dishonest practices? No, Annabella Darrell! My brother Lionel, heaven bless him, did ask me to be kind to you, and I am going to be kind, in my own way, by saving you from destruction. Good-by! When you want to see me again, you can send for me."

She swept out, leaving Mrs. Darrell dissolved in angry tears. "Hateful woman!" were the last words she heard, as she closed the door, sobbed out in a paroxysm of spite.

"Hateful woman!" she repeated, as she made her way to the carriage that waited outside, with Miss Folly in it. "Of course! naturally! Now she will tell Hubert Cran-

ston every word I have said, and it will be war.

"War, Folly!" she addressed her companion, who was tranquilly helping her in and arranging her shawl. "When we get home, you will oblige me by getting out my warpaint and feathers—please be particular about the feathers!—and sharpening all the axes and tomahawks in the house. You understand?"

"More or less, Mrs. Damian!" said Miss Folly, demurely. "Are you taking the trail in person, or am I?"

Mrs. Damian considered a moment.

"Both of us!" she announced. "It will require both. And—listen! before you hunt up the things, write a note—I'll dictate it—to Sir Hubert Cranston. My dear! My Professor always said—no matter! Is there no way of hurrying these horses? I believe they are fed solely on poppies and mandragora. I can almost hear them snore!"

"Mrs. Damian presents her compliments to Sir Hubert Cranston and will be glad if he will allow his stepdaughter, Miss Castiglione, to take tea with her to-morrow at four o'clock. If agreeable, Mrs. Damian will send for the young lady at threeforty-five, and send her home later.

"Heathcote. Tuesday."

Sir Hubert Cranston read this note aloud with a frowning brow; then looked up at his sister, Mrs. Champion, who was sitting near him.

"What does this mean?" he growled. "Have you been meddling? Talking about Nella?"

The lady shook her head.

"Not a word! Let me see the note!" She studied it. "Dictated! h'm! Of course she is old; old as the hills, isn't she? I've never seen her. I suppose Annabella has told her about the girl."

"Why should she?" Sir Hubert looked puzzled, and spoke irritably. "Annabella doesn't care a straw about the girl; never saw her but once, and never wanted to see her again. I shall simply decline with thanks."

He made a motion toward the writing-table, but Mrs. Champion checked him.

"Wait a moment! This may be a friendly move; friendly toward you, I mean. Annabella was expecting a visit from Mrs. Damian this afternoon. I know that. Suppose the old lady has fallen in with the plan, and takes this way of showing her approbation! Why not? She has never seen Nella, doesn't know what a deplorable simpleton she is; old people like to see young creatures now and then. I should let her go, if I were you, Hubert."

"Pshaw! I don't want her moping about among people, looking like Patience off the monument. Bad enough to have guests here in the hotel asking about her. A woman waylaid me this morning—confounded impudence!—to ask if she couldn't do something to cheer the young girl up. I sent her

to the right about, I can tell you, in double quick time."

Mrs. Champion looked thoughtful.

"I should let her go!" she said again. "She won't say anything, she wouldn't dare to. And if Mrs. Damian sees what a miserable little atomy she is, she will not wonder that you and Annabella want to be rid of her. Besides, you don't want to snub the old lady before you've seen the color of her money. Get her on your side; that's the first thing to do."

The result of this conversation was a polite note despatched to Heathcote, presenting Sir Hubert Cranston's compliments and respects to Mrs. Damian, and assuring her that he accepted with the greatest possible pleasure her extremely kind invitation for his little daughter. Mrs. Damian was gracious indeed, Sir Hubert added, to extend this charming courtesy to a child who, he deeply regretted to say, was by constitution and temperament little

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fitted for society; he could only hope that the gratification of making Mrs. Damian's acquaintance might dispel in some measure, if only for an hour, the cloud that seemed gathering on the poor child's mind.

## CHAPTER XIII

## HONOR MAKES A CLEAN BREAST OF IT

Mrs. Holiday was making a morning call at Heathcote. She had chosen the hour when Honor and Miss Folly had gone for their morning swim, and she and Mrs. Damian were sitting on the veranda, enjoying the delicious air of a golden morning. They had exchanged cheerful remarks about the weather, the flowers, the various delights of the season, and now silence fell between them. Mrs. Damian did not offer to break it; she was conscious that her charming neighbor had something on her mind, and probably wished to get it off; her silence was somehow inviting, and Mrs. Holiday, raising her beautiful dark eyes, felt it to be so.

"I have come for a little consultation, Mrs. Damian!" she said smiling. "I chose this time because I knew you would probably be alone. It is about my boy Robin."

"Dirk Hatteraick? He's an uncommonly nice boy, but you probably know that."

Mrs. Holiday laughed, a tender little laugh.

"He *is* a nice boy! You are very good to let them play in Poky Hole. That is what we called it when I was a child."

Mrs. Damian nodded. "And we, when I was. My dear! my brother Lionel and I were the Young Jägers: Mayne Reid, you know. Our favorite author. I remember our crying bitterly because our father would not class him among the ten great writers of the world. Well! what has Dirk been up to?"

"I don't—quite—know!" Mrs. Holiday spoke slowly, thoughtfully. "He tells me it is 'no harm,' and perfectly all right, which is entirely reassuring, as he is a truthful boy. But he does not feel at liberty to give me any explanation, and as your little ward is concerned in the matter, I thought it well to come to you."

Mrs. Damian looked up sharply; then nodded. "Let's hear!" she said briefly.

"My eldest son, Hal, was coming back from the postoffice—last Tuesday evening it was, the day of the beach picnic—about half-pastnine o'clock, and about halfway home he met these two children, my Robin and your Honor, racing along at full speed in the opposite direction. He thought of riding after them and stopping them, but decided—wisely, I think —to wait and hear what Robin had to say for himself. He went to Robin's room and waited there. A little after ten Robin came in, and Hal guestioned him closely; but all he would say was that it was 'all right,' that he was sure I would approve if I knew, but that he was not at liberty to tell me or anyone, as it was 'not his secret'."

She paused; Mrs. Damian, who was listen-

ing intently, looked up again from her knitting; her eyes were very bright and sharp. "Well?" she said. "Go on! it was Honor's secret, I suppose?"

"I rather suppose so!" Mrs. Holiday spoke reluctantly. "He-Robin-has never had any secret before that I did not share. At least," she added with a laugh, "except those connected with smuggling or treasure-seeking. I have never tried to penetrate the mysteries of the Kaim of Derncleugh. I am too tall to get in there now, anyhow."

She paused, and then added, rather timidly, "I thought you ought to know about it, Mrs. Damian; at least to know as much as I did. I don't for a moment think the children were up to any serious mischief, but——."

"My dear!" Mrs. Damian broke in with one of her sudden swoops. "If you hadn't told me, you would be-a very different sort of person from what you are!" with an emphatic nod. "Of course you were perfectly right;

and probably the boy was perfectly right, and possibly Honor—" she paused, and rubbed her handsome nose thoughtfully with her ivory knitting-needle. "Probably, we will say, Honor thought she was right: if she thought about it at all, that is. More likely she flashed off like a little red-haired comet, dragging the unlucky Dirk—Robin—in her wake, on some wild-goose chase. I cannot imagine what!" she added after a reflective pause. "She has hardly been out of our sight, Martha Folly's and mine, for half an hour at a time, except when she has been asleep, or playing with your boys in Poky Hole—I beg its pardon! the Kaim of Derncleugh. The truth is-" Mrs. Damian spoke slowly and meditatively— "we have a great deal still to find out about the child, Mrs. Holiday. Been at boardingschool all her life, you know, from the time she was six; parents died when she was twelve: my dear!" with a swoop, "scientific people should be forbidden to marry; though what

would have become of my Professor without me to keep him from destroying himself by mistake—well! we can't settle that, can we? Anyhow we had no children, more's the pity: consistency is a jewel! So now, here is this child: a good, sweet, honest child—I'm as sure of her honesty as you are of your boy's-but with the red-haired temperament—her bonnet stuffed so full of romantic and sentimental and fantastic bees, my dear, that I wonder it does not go off in spontaneous combustion, like the dreadful old man in 'Bleak House.' A girl-Quixote; that's what Honor is, tilting at every windmill she sees. We were ten days in London, and I had-or rather Martha Folly had—to find homes for two dogs, three cats, and a lost child. Fortunately the child's mother turned up, shrieking like a steam calliope. And"-slowly-"I think it probable that Honor has found some kitten or puppy or baby here, that she thinks is hungry, or lost, or unhappy, and needs help or sympathy. But why upon earth"—Mrs. Damian rubbed her nose again irritably—"she couldn't have come straight to me instead of getting your boy involved, and getting you—most rightly and properly—stirred up, I cannot imagine."

"Can't you, dear lady?"

At the tone, Mrs. Damian looked up quickly, and saw Mrs. Holiday's dark eyes brimming with amused light.

"Forgive me! but at fifteen, would you—"

Mrs. Damian returned her look for a moment, then broke into her little rustling laugh.

"Would I have chosen my respected grandmother for a confidant, or an agreeable boy of my own age? I rather think—I rather think you are a saucy girl, my dear, even if you are the mother of six. Of course you are perfectly right," she spoke in high good humor, the disturbed wrinkles melting into her own shrewd and delightful smile.

She patted Mrs. Holiday's hand. "Perfectly right. Your name is Katherine, isn't it? I shall call you Katherine; you shall be one of my girls. And between you and me we'll soon settle this matter of the children. Hark! I hear them coming in. My dear! do you go and meet them at the door—and take Martha Folly off into the garden, to gather cabbages or something, and send Honor to me. Goodby! come again soon!"

Honor had had a delightful swim. The surf on Elba Beach was high, and she and Miss Folly had battled with the "wild white horses" rapturously. Now she was coming, as her wont was, to tell "my Aunt" all about it. Mrs. Damian enjoyed greatly these "draughts from the Fountain of Youth," as she called them. Honor came singing into the room, prepared to give a full account of every plunge and tumble, attack and defeat,

of the foaming waves. "Oh, my Aunt," she cried, "it was glorious! oh, but glorious! You see, we——"

She stopped short, as Mrs. Damian pointed a knitting-needle at her. It was a signal.

"How then?" she asked quickly. "I make an error?"

"Do not enter a room speaking!" said Mrs. Damian. "You may interrupt someone else. I happen to be alone, but the principle remains the same. Honor, where did you go on Tuesday evening at half-past-nine o'clock?"

Honor stopped short in the middle of the room. The color left her face as if a hand had struck it out: she seemed turned to marble. Another instant, and it returned, flooding over neck, cheek and brow in a wave of crimson. She advanced two steps and fell on her knees before Mrs. Damian.

"My Aunt," she said, "I accuse myself!

I have sinned!"

Honor was a Protestant, but many of the

pupils at *Pension Madeleine* were Catholics, and she was familiar with the rites of that church. Confession had always seemed to her a highly romantic office, and she had often wished, in secret, that she could practice it. To kneel, her dark hair sweeping about her (in imagination Honor's hair was always night-black, with eyes to match) with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, and tell Father Coué, the kind old confessor, all her troubles—how soulful! how thrilling!

"I accuse myself!" she repeated. "I have sinned."

Mrs. Damian's dark eyes, usually so piercing, were full of kindly light; almost, it seemed—but that could hardly be, thought Honor—of understanding and sympathy.

"Tell me!" she said. "Out with it, Honor! the whole thing!"

Out it all came, from the beginning. Honor's first sight of the dark-eyed girl, on the gangplank, boarding the steamer; the thrill

that passed through her at sight of that sweet, sad face; the feeling, coming over her at the instant even, that here was one she could love, one who might be her friend. Then—the discovery that the desired one was ill, suffering, solitary; the further discovery that the old gentleman, so distinguished in appearance, outwardly all that there was of courteous and elegant, was in reality a monster of cruelty, of "bar-rbar-rity!" She touched lightly on the episode of the sugar heart. "You remember, my Aunt? I told you I took it for a purpose. That purpose was fulfilled when I laid it in Nella's hand; her little cold, lonely hand." Then—the first stolen interview at the Bel Air; her own vow of friendship, of constancy, which Nella had not, it is true, actually returned, but had not rejected, thus binding Honor to her forever by chains of adamant. The days of silence and separation: how to approach her beloved? And then—last—the picnic!

"Figure to yourself, my Aunt, that I

learned she was alone; that these people were leaving her constantly solitary, while diverting themselves in gayety every hour. Figure to yourself that I knew she would be alone that evening, weeping perhaps, sad at heart, wondering, it might be, that the friend who promised to adore her came not, made no sign.

"What to do? I flew! Robin showed me the way; not in any way is he to blame, my Aunt. I—I alone, if there is sin, confess it, and will do penance. We found her, pauvrette, desolate, deserted. Ah! had you seen her, so pale, so weary; it crushed me the heart. A moment only I stayed, long enough only to assure her of my undying loyalty, to fasten round her neck a token—a talisman, which she is to send me if danger threatens. Then we flew back, Robin and I-oh, but, flew! We parted at the gate, he seeking his home, I creeping round the garden, behind the hedge, the bushes, rending myself in fragments al-

most, I attain my window—I enter—it is finished. I sleep, with tears of tenderness, but with peace in my bosom. My Aunt, I have told you all, all! I attend your rebuke in meekness."

Honor folded her hands on her bosom in an attitude of humility, and remained kneeling, with bowed head, a statue of The Fair Penitent.

Mrs. Damian surveyed her with twinkling eyes under her fine brows; there was a silence of some seconds, enjoyed (it may be) by both Honors, each in her own way. At length:

"Goosey!" said Mrs. Damian abruptly, "why didn't you tell me?"

Honor looked up wide-eyed.

"My Aunt! when I say that I have told you all. Not a step, hardly even a word, have I omitted."

"Beforehand! why, in the name of all that is—well, inflammable—didn't you tell me or Martha Folly all this,—if not on board ship, at least that day, when you came back from the picnic?"

Honor's eyes grew wider and wider.

"My Aunt! to disturb you! to interrupt, it might be, your slumbers, at your great age?"

"Let my age alone!" said Mrs. Damian sharply. "Noah was six hundred years old when he built the ark—or so we are told. Then why didn't you tell Martha Folly? She is old too, of course," sarcastically, "but not so old as Noah and me. You are good friends; you like her, don't you?"

"Oh, my Aunt! I love her! she is, next to yourself, bien entendu, my best and kindest——"

"Then why didn't you tell her? The truth, Honor!"

Honor's head bent lower and lower; the color, which had subsided, came rushing again into her face.

"It is—" she stammered, "it is that—I said it not to myself, my Aunt; not even did I think it to myself in words; but—I suppose—my heart knew that Miss Folly would not have let me go."

Mrs. Damian nodded with a satisfied air. "That's all right!" she said in her usual crisp, kind tone. "You have made a clean breast of it: an English idiom, and a good one. That is what I wanted, and I have got it. Now, my dear, put away your heroics! get up, and come sit by me. Here! you may hold this yarn. Now listen to my side of this affair!"

It was a very subdued Honor who listened to Mrs. Damian's brief and clear exposition of the matter. She herself, it was made clear, was responsible not only for Honor's physical well-being, her clothes and food and so on, but for the healthy or morbid condition of her mind, heart and soul. Responsible not only to the sweet ladies of the *Pension Madeleine*,

but to Honor's parents, one of whom was her own near kin, and both of whom she had loved. She had taken it upon herself—for reasons which seemed at the time sufficient—to remove Honor from the surroundings of her child-hood. They were happy and peaceful surroundings, excellent in almost every way, but it seemed advisable to broaden her horizon a little, to give her a glimpse of other places and people, to transform her, in short, gradually and gently, from the little French pensionaire to the American girl.

"I have given you a great deal of freedom, Honor"—Mrs. Damian spoke in a grave, thoughtful tone, different from her usual dry abruptness—"because I believe in freedom. But freedom without common-sense to back it up is a poor thing. In all that you have told me I find plenty of romance, plenty of good feeling—romantic, generous feeling, my dear, which I understand, however strange that may seem to you. Noah was fifteen once—no!

I won't tease you!" seeing Honor's eyes fill with tears. "I have found these things, and good things they all are in their own kind and degree; but I find precious little common-sense. Now, I have a bargain to propose."

Her tone was benevolence itself, and Honor looked up through her tears, and met a smile so warmly kind that a timid responsive smile trembled on her own lips.

"Suppose," Mrs. Damian went on, "we go into partnership in this matter of Nella Castiglione. I knew her parents, as well as yours,—I know people all over the world—and liked them; and I know her stepfather, and don't like him. Don't interrupt!" she swooped, as Honor started forward, her lips opening to speak. "I should like to help her, but it must be in my own way, Honor, and you must have no secrets from me about her. No more flying by night, you understand! Now! now! now! don't be ridiculous, child!" for

Honor had fallen on her hand and was kissing it with ardor.

"My Aunt! but you are too kind! but you are angelic! oh, with all my heart I promise, I vow, I swear!"

"You needn't swear!" said Mrs. Damian, "it isn't done. You promise, on your own name -Honor Bright-to have no secrets from me in this one matter. Have all the Poky Hole secrets you like—I have one myself—no matter about that! but where this girl is concerned, come straight to me with every problem. Is it a bargain? Shake hands on it!" They shook hands and Mrs. Damian listened patiently to Honor's outpouring of gratitude. It was too wonderful! no one ever lived before so kind, so good, so sympathetic—(how then? Sympathetic? But that was strange! pathetic meant sad, not so?) She, Honor, was from now on her slave the most devoted, the most passionately bound. And her friend, Nella, she in time, Honor was confident, would be combled—pardon!—ovairwhelmed by the kindness which——

"By the way!" said Mrs. Damian, in her dryest tone, "she's coming to take tea with us to-morrow, at four o'clock!"

## CHAPTER XIV

## NELLA AT HEATHCOTE

"Nella! Nella! I cannot believe it, can you? You are really here; I see you; I hear you. Cherished one, are you happy? Tell me that you are happy!"

Tea was over; such a tea! muffins, pound cake, strawberry jam; all languidly nibbled at by the guest, all heartily and joyously devoured by Honor. Mrs. Damian had been "all that there was of most adorable" in presiding over the tea-table; Miss Folly played to perfection her usual part of diffusing cheerfulness and calm. Now the two girls had been dismissed with the charge to "go and amuse themselves," and were sitting side by side in the hammock under the great casuarina tree.

"Tell me that you are happy!" repeated Honor. "Tell me that you are glad to be here, my Nella!"

Nella raised her dark mournful eyes with a faint smile.

"Indeed I am glad to be here!" she said.
"It is beautiful; and how kind Mrs. Damian
is! but—happy, Honor? I have never been
happy since my mother died, nor even long
before that; I shall never be happy again."

"You will! you shall!"

Honor flung her arms round her friend, and clasped her in an ardent embrace. "To have you unhappy, I cannot bear it, Nella. No, it is too much! It must not be! Look! regard but the sky that it is blue, the flowers that they are beautifool—beautiful! listen—ah! chérie, listen to the bird there, what he sings of joy! you shall have joy, Nella."

Nella smiled again, this time with a tinge of amusement.

"You are a dear!" she said softly. "A

dear kind little thing! If you could give me joy, I am sure you would."

Honor was not quite prepared to be called a little thing, even by her adored friend. She was taller than Nella, and—"How old are you, darling?" she asked. "Fifteen? I also, Nella! we woke to life in the same year. Perhaps—who knows? at the same instant!"

Honor glowed at this romantic thought. "You must have been the most adorable baby that ever was seen, Nella. Don't you love babies? Me, I adore them! There is a baby at Merrymount, it is too delicious! Mrs. Holiday lets me hold him sometimes. His toes are pink pearls! Ah! for example! if you could hold him, Nella, then you would be happy, not so? Let us go! my Aunt will let me, I know."

Honor half rose from her seat, but seeing Nella's look of alarm, changed her mind on the instant.

"No! you are weary; you are not strong

enough yet to meet more strangers, even of the most delightful; and they are delightful, those at Merrymount, ah yes! but now—oh! I have it! You shall explore with me. You shall see the—how then does that say itself? the Kaim of Derncleugh! Ah!" kindling as she saw Nella's look of intelligence, "you know? You have read 'Guy Mannering?"

There was a faint answering gleam in Nella's face as she explained. In her mother's travelling library was a set of the Waverly Novels, on thin paper; handy volumes, her constant companions. Mother and daughter read them aloud together, over and over. "Guy Mannering" was the last book—she broke off with a sob, but recovered herself at Honor's look of anguished sympathy.

"I should like to see the place!" she rose from the hammock. "Show it to me, you kind little thing!"

All was quiet in the Kaim of Derncleugh

when they entered, all in good order. Honor knew that the boys had slept there the night before, a great smuggling venture being on hand; but the fragrant cedar-couches were neatly laid, the bags of treasure tidily stowed in their proper corner.

"Oh! they have brought more! Look, Nella! 'Saffires'! They don't spell very well, but they are such nice boys! I wish oh! oh, Nella, listen!"

A voice from the door spoke in a low, cautious tone.

"Donner!" it said.

"Blitzen!" replied Honor hastily and eagerly. "It is Dirk Hatteraick, Nella! Robin Holiday, you know, the boy who came with me the other night, my other friend. Come!"

Stooping low, she crept into the outer room, dragging Nella after her. "Dirk!" she whispered, "it is I, Honor, and here is my friend, Nella Castiglione."

"Hagel!" muttered the boy. "I mean, jolly glad to see you, of course. You did give me a jar, though! Of course the other chaps are at home, and I just came to reconnoitre, and make sure that all was clear for to-night. I say! I'm most frightfully hungry. Let's have some jam and biscuits!"

"We've had too much tea!" said Honor regretfully. "I couldn't eat anything more, could you, Nella?"

"Have some grog, at least! I'll mix you some!"

The smuggler chief scuttled hospitably about on all fours, (none of the three could stand upright in the low, vaulted space!) and produced three tin cups and a large black bottle labeled "Grog."

"It's all right!" he said, seeing Nella's look of dismay. "It's laurel tea and pineapple juice mixed; we like it frightfully, but of course you may think it horrid."

He filled the cups and raised his own with

a dark look. "To the Lay!" he said mysteriously.

"The Lay!" repeated Honor, raising her cup, but with a puzzled look. "Lay—that is a song, not so? Of Ancient Rome?"

"It's that too," Robin explained; "but in smuggling and all that, of course it's a—a—what you've got on hand, you see. We chaps have one on for to-night. Billy Blessington is to be the gauger, and we're going to—never mind!" he nodded darkly. "It isn't a thing for women to be mixed up in; but we hope you'll wish us luck!" he added politely, with a friendly glance toward Nella. She in turn raised her cup, and said in a low but significant tone: "Gude milling in the darkman!"

Honor looked in amazement first at her, then at the boy. Nella was smiling, a smile that for the first time was not entirely sad. Robin was grinning with obvious delight. "I say!" he murmured. "This is ripping.

Sturm wind! You're fly to the gab, aren't you?"

"A little!" said Nella modestly. "I used to think—what a wonderful play it would make."

"It does—it is! Dad saw it in London when he was a kid—a kinchin, I mean. He said Meg Merrilies was about seven feet tall, with eyes like a lighthouse. I say—hagel! your eyes are dark. I don't suppose—you wouldn't like to be Meg, would you? It would be perfectly ripping if you would!"

Honor felt a momentary pang; what girl would not, in her place? If it were not for the odious red hair, she herself might—but the next instant she glowed with generous pleasure.

"She shall! of course you shall, Nella! you would be perfect. Sit! sit down there, and say the first spell! oh, do, darling!"

She almost pushed Nella into a sitting posture in the corner, and picking up a cedar bough from the floor, thrust it into her hands.

"That will do for a distaff!" she cried. "Now—say it, dearest!"

Nella hesitated.

"Please do!" muttered Hatteraick.
"Hagel! it would be ripping!"

With a little nod Nella took the bough and turned it in her slender fingers, saying in a low, clear tone that was almost a chant:

"Twist ye! twine ye! even so,
Mingle shades of joy and woe,
Hope, and fear, and peace, and strife,
In the thread of human life."

"Honor!"

Miss Folly's clear voice was calling from the veranda.

"Come, and bring Nella; the carriage is here to take her home."

The two girls scrambled to their feet and exchanged hasty but fervent greetings with the Smuggler Chief.

"Good-by! good luck!"

"Cut ben whids, and stow them!" muttered the outlaw. "You understand? Mum's the word! So long!"

Driving back to the hotel, whither she and Honor were escorting their guest, Miss Martha Folly cast several thoughtful glances at the latter, who sat beside her. What a change, in two short hours! She had brought away from the Bel Air a listless, languid, melancholy child, drooping like a broken flower, not speaking save when spoken to, and then mostly in monosyllables. It had been real pain to kind Martha Folly to see a young creature so "beaten down," as she expressed it to herself. Beaten down like a lily after heavy rain! Now, after this brief hour of sunshine, the lily was lifting its head. Nella's countenance was not glowing like a torch-Miss Folly's expression again, as she glanced at Honor sitting on the little seat opposite them-but it was almost animated. A soft light shone in the dark eyes; a pensive smile curved the delicate

lips as she listened to Honor's rapturous outpourings.

"Every day-we will be together, darling! not so, Miss Folly-dear? (Honor made one word of name and attribute.) You know now the way? Naturally not! that I am stupid! I will come for you; my aunt will permit, not so, Miss Folly-dear? She is all that there is of kindest, most gracious—when not annoyed. And soon you will learn the way: at this corner—ah! but look! but listen, Nella! you see this wall, with the hibiscus above? Now a little gate! you see? Through that gate one passes into a deserted garden—no! not deserted, but the people are away at present and do not soon return—an alone garden how then? It is alone, Miss Folly-dear!"

"It is lonely, not alone, Honor!"

For a moment Honor's bright brow clouded. "Never of my life," she cried, "can I see, can I understand! English ties itself in knots to strangle me! n'importe! that is to study,

not so? Now, I do not study. The garden is lonely, but of a beauty! great trees trail their branches on velvet turf; there are palms, there are ferns, there are flowers—oh, but flowers! and behind the house—listen Nella! there is a harbor—ah! catastrophe! yet again?"

This time Nella laughed outright, the prettiest little tinkling laugh, which so delighted Honor that she laughed responsively.

"Arbor!" corrected Miss Folly with her sedate smile. "One is land, the other is water; you can remember by that."

Honor nodded. "Arbor! harbor! I can —I will—I do! An arbor then, Nella, with seats of cool white stone, and a pergola, covered with a great purple vine; but, covered! and purple as for king's robes, not so, Miss Folly-dear? You have seen?"

"I have seen. Bougainvillea; it is splendid, though redder than the true royal purple!"

"Ainsi—thus—when you have learned the way, my Nella, it is then we will meet, not so? I down the hill, you up; then we meet in that delicious har—arbor, and there we sit and talk—oh, but talk—till it is time for tea, and I lead you up to Heathcote. Dear Heathcote! I love it so; already it is home, not so, Miss Folly-dear? Ah! would it were your home, too, Nella!" and then, seeing the shadows steal over her friend's face—"and after tea," she went on hastily, "we go, as to-day, to the Kaim of Derncleugh, and talk with Dirk Hatteraick, and dr-rink—gr-rog—"

"Honor, what are you talking about?"

Honor started, and clasped her hands violently together, blushing scarlet.

"It is—a secret!" she faltered. "I must not tell; I must—cut—something—and stow it. Nella!" she turned an appealing look on her friend: "what is it I must do?"

Nella was blushing too. Miss Folly's thoughtful eyes turned from one candid face

to the other. "No harm!" she said to herself. "Some make-believe!"

"It is out of a book!" said Nella softly. "It means to—to—be still, and not tell anything."

"I see! and what kind of grog do you drink?"

"Oh!" Honor kindled again. "Gr-rog (when excited, Honor always rolled her r's) of the most delicious, Miss Folly-dear, laurel tea and pineapple juice—tiens! you shall come! you shall taste it, not so? Dirk-Robin—will be altogether enchanted to see you, I know he will. And"-she added in a final tone—"my aunt knows all about it, Miss Folly-dear, so that truly it is all right. That she has not told you"-Honor laid an eager hand on Miss Folly's arm-"it is only that it is not our secret, do you see? Your feelings are not hurt, Miss Folly-dear? You are not sensitive, no?"

This time it was Miss Folly who laughed.

"I am not sensitive!" she agreed. "Not in the very least. But here we are at the hotel; and here—"

She stopped. As they drew up before the Bel Air, a tall man was just entering the gate. He turned at the sound of wheels, and threw a careless glance toward the carriage; looked again keenly; then advanced, raising his hat with elaborate courtesy.

"Ah! my little Nella, you come back to me," said Sir Hubert Cranston in silken tones. "And these are the kind young ladies of Heathcote, with whom I am sure you have passed a delightful afternoon. Thank them, my child, and then let me help you out. You have been missed, I assure you."

Honor glanced at Nella, and saw her dead white, even to the lips. She met Honor's tender look with one almost of terror.

"Good-by!" she murmured. "You have been so kind—" her voice seemed to fail her. She returned faintly Honor's ardent hand clasp and Miss Folly's friendly greeting.
"Mrs. Damian hopes Nella may come again soon, and often!"

Miss Folly spoke very clearly, leaning forward in her seat. "She will come for her any day, and send her home; she charged me to say this, if I should meet you, Sir Hubert Cranston."

Sir Hubert Cranston replied in a tone of studied courtesy. "Mrs. Damian is most kind! I fear, however, that gayety does not suit my little wood-violet. A delicate blossom, Miss—ah—pardon me, but the name escapes me—Miss Folly? Quite so! and this—" he cast a sharp glance at Honor, and encountering, as once before, her full gaze of horror and indignation, paused, and seemed to consider, pulling his silvery mustache.

"I have met this young lady before, surely," he said finally. "At the beach picnic, was it not? But even then, her face was familiar."

"On the voyage!" said Miss Folly, tran-

quilly. "We also came on the Coromandel. This is Honor Bright, Mrs. Damian's ward."

"Mrs. Damian's ward!" repeated Sir Hubert Cranston thoughtfully. "Quite so! Kindly present to Mrs. Damian my most respectful compliments, with thanks for the pleasure she has given to my little girl and for her gracious suggestion for the future. I doubt, however, whether it will be wise to repeat the experiment at present; the child, as you see, is quite exhausted. Nella, my little one, you will do well to go to your room at once and seek repose. Young ladies, your humble servant!"

### CHAPTER XV

#### THE VELVET PAW

### "My DEAR HONOR:

"I have been so far from well in the past few weeks that I have not been able to show you the attention that I could have wished. While I should be surprised to learn that this had seriously incommoded you, I still regret it deeply, because there is much of vital importance to myself that I greatly desire to talk over with you while you are in Bermuda. I do not feel able as yet for any conversation which might in any way lead to controversy, and since unfortunately our opinions seem to differ in many matters (to my abiding sorrow), I do not seek to take up these matters with you just yet. I do, however, stand in great need of a little cheering society, and I find the society of youth specially sympathetic during this period of ill-health. I should therefore be very glad to have your little ward accompany me on a short drive this afternoon, if you can spare her. I may perhaps be able to show her some of the beauties of the island, with which you are not familiar. If convenient to you, I will send the

carriage to Heathcote at four o'clock this afternoon, for your young charge.

"With deep regret that I cannot, under all the circumstances, ask you to join us, believe me, dear Honor,

"Always affectionately yours,
"Annabella Darrell."

"P. S.

"You will remember that darling Lionel always warned me against emotion. My sympathy, he used to say, if not kept in check, would destroy me. A.D."

"Now what," said Mrs. Damian, looking up, after reading this letter aloud, "what do you suppose Annabella Darrell is up to now? Folly, what do you think?"

Miss Folly raised her tranquil eyes from her sewing.

"A little anchor to windward," she suggested. "She thinks Honor may be of use in some way."

"Precisely, my dear," said Mrs. Damian.
"A little unsheathing of the pretty claws, that's all. The question is, what to do. I incline

to let her go. Yes, I know Honor cannot abide her," as Miss Folly raised a glance of mute protest, "but it will do her no harm, and it may produce a light on various topics hitherto dim. Tell her, will you, Folly? Don't send her to me unless she really makes a fuss. But she will not, good child."

And Honor did not make a fuss, but she mourned and almost wept, at the thought of what was before her. She had never seen Mrs. Darrell but once, and had no wish for another interview, but on being told that her guardian really wished it, there was nothing more to be said, by a girl brought up as Honor had been.

Four o'clock, therefore, saw Honor in her best hat (the pretty shady one, with the wreath of pansies and anemones), sober but resolute, stepping into the ample barouche lined with yellow satin, and drawn by cream-colored horses, in which Mrs. Darrell was already seated. The lady was certainly an im-

pressive figure, as she leaned gracefully back on her satin pillows. A long mantle of goldcolored silk, wrought with delicate needlework of the same shade, draped her from head to foot. Beneath it showed folds of rich satin of a slightly darker shade. Her head was crowned by a most marvelous coiffure. Honor, marveling at its beauty, did not know whether to call it hat or bonnet. Presumably there was some foundation, but all that showed was wave upon wave of bird-of-paradise plumage, floating, golden, magnificent. The face beneath it was undoubtedly very beautiful. Of course Mrs. Darrell must be old, anybody over twenty-five was old to Honor, but there was no hint of the lady's actual age. One would have said a superb middle-aged blonde, her charms still full blown, with no hint of the withered leaf. The art of making-up was unknown at Pension Madeleine, and Mrs. Damian wore her wrinkles as proudly as a queen her jewels.

"How do you do, my child?" Mrs. Darrell bowed and waved a graceful hand in greeting. Her very gloves, Honor noted, were of a pale gold color. It was like going to drive with the Queen of Sheba.

"It is very kind of you," the lady went on, "to take pity on me in my solitary drive. My nerves seldom permit me to have a companion, but I noticed a certain repose in your face," (this was certainly a singular statement; Honor's face was in repose when she was asleep, or deep in some favorite book, but seldom at any other time) "and I felt the need of youthful sympathy. I feel sure that you are sympathetic."

Honor tried to look sympathetic, and murmured something that she hoped sounded so. Inwardly she was saying, "A large yellow cat."

"Sympathy," the lady went on, waving her gold-colored, rose-lined parasol, "sympathy is what I live on. My adored husband gave it to me in full measure. I was his idol, I

was his life, as he was mine. Except his profession, in which he was eminent—a worldwide authority, my dear—he had no other thought save me. 'My family,' he used to say, 'you are my family, Annabella.' Ah, it was because I appreciated him, my dear, because I knew what he was. People's own families never appreciate them. My family never appreciated me, but I need not go into that. Since my Lionel's death," she drew out a lace handkerchief, and applied it carefully to her eyes, "I have been a sad and solitary creature, you see. Why, you ask-" turning suddenly to Honor with a dramatic gesture—"am I not shrouded in black, why does not crêpe swathe me to the throat? You ask me, I see it in your eyes."

"Indeed, Madame," stammered Honor, "I never thought——"

But Mrs. Darrell swept on with a regal gesture.

"It would have been my wish, it would have

been the desire of my heart, Honor, never again to wear, never again to see, anything but the deepest black. But it was not to be. I could not go against the wishes of my departed saint. I had-to you, my child, I can speak frankly-what someone calls the fatal gift of beauty. My Lionel never allowed anything unbeautiful to come near me. 'The setting,' he used to say, 'must strive to be worthy of the gem.' His picturesque way of expressing himself, you understand. He was poet, artist, even more than scientist. So I knew that if I shrouded myself in black, he could not rest in his grave. Braving hostile opinion, disregarding those who, though related to him by ties of blood, had no comprehension of his nature,—a year of violet, deep, rich, soft, suiting my tint more or less; a year of mauve, less becoming, but still not bad, and then I returned to the color for which I was born, golden, the color of the sun, Honor, the color of all that is brightest and most precious.

With bleeding heart and streaming eyes, I obeyed what I knew was my Lionel's wish, and returned to gold. His family, always totally lacking in sympathy and comprehension——"

Honor had been listening as well as she could. Mrs. Darrell's voice had sunk into a monotone, and it was not easy to listen, when there were such wonderful things to see, and at this point her attention wandered. They were driving very slowly (the cream-colored horses were fat and sleepy, and so was Santo, the driver) along beautiful coral-paved roads, with walls of coral on either hand. The walls were tapestried with delicate ferns. Above them rose the wonderful hedges of scarlet hibiscus and rose-pink oleander. The marvel of these was as fresh to Honor as the first time she saw them. She never could guite believe that she was on earth, that she had not strayed into some wonderful star of blossoms. The houses, too, just here, were unbelievably beautiful; little old white houses that seemed

to blend with the rock itself, with quaint dormer windows, which here and there seemed to jut from the rock itself, as subterranean dwellings. A little way ahead of them there were little three-cornered blinds on the very face of the rock. What a wonderful place there must be inside, what an enchanting hidingplace! And above the house, trailing over trellises, drooping in purple clusters from chimney and window, the purple splendor of the bougainvillea. Oh, glory, glory! where were her aunt and Miss Folly, that she might show them this new part of Paradise? Ah, in Eden there could have been nothing so beautiful as this, and there were no houses there at all-

Honor came to herself with a start, and sat bolt upright. What was the smooth, purling voice saying?

"Of course from his sister I could expect nothing, I never had expected anything. Honor Darrell—Mrs. Damian, I would sayhas always been an entirely selfish person, cold as stone, hard as——"

"Pardon me, pardon me, madame," Honor had turned perfectly white, as she did in strong emotion. Her hands were clasped tightly together, her eyes shot blue lightnings. "Pardon me, madame! With respect for your age, I cannot listen—no, not for a moment can I listen—to such words about my guardian. Cold, hard—she—but she is all that there is of kind and generous, of—of—heavenly! Never can I tell her goodness to me, never can I permit that in my presence—"

Mrs. Darrell turned upon her with a sudden movement. It was as if the beautiful yellow cat had suddenly opened wide eyes of anger, had unsheathed ivory claws.

"You—you dare to speak so to me, you little——"

"Look out, Annabella, I hear every word you say!"

The deep musical tones seemed to come

from the rock itself. They were now abreast of the little three-cornered window that Honor had noticed ahead.

"I would not advise you," the voice went on, "to try that game."

A little rustling laugh followed, Mrs. Damian's laugh, then silence fell. Honor, terror-stricken, looked at her companion. A dreadful change had come over the golden lady. Her jaw had fallen, her lips sagged apart, quivering in an ecstasy of terror. Her eyes glared. Suddenly she clutched Honor's arm.

"You spoke?" she hissed. "You little devil, you spoke?"

Then all in a moment, she sank back into a corner of the big barouche, and fainted away.

Honor never quite knew how she got through that next half-hour. At her startled cry, both horses and driver started from their doze; the former started off at a lively rate, the driver grasped the reins, which had been hanging loosely from his hands, and stared about him bewildered. As they dashed up a rather steep slope and around a corner, Honor, looking back, saw a slender, erect figure emerge from the little rock house, and stand quietly observing them. A white-gloved hand waved in greeting. It was Mrs. Damian.

"Perfectly simple, my dear," said Mrs. Damian, tinkling her cup of tea. "The simplest thing in the world; though I confess," she chuckled, "it may have seemed slightly supernatural. Old Mammy Liza lives in that little cottage. I always go to see her, ought to have been before. She took care of me when I had typhoid, twenty years ago. I thought she was a hundred then, but I don't suppose she was; she doesn't look a day older now. Dear old woman, ask her up to tea some evening next week, will you, Folly, and have a nice cake for her, and a basket of goodies for her to take home, and you better get

a nice cotton dress for her, too, bright Madrasy colors. Yes, dear me, Mammy Liza is the very salt of the earth. Be sure you get plenty, she weighs two hundred pounds. Well, so nothing to do but she must take me into her front cellar to show me her new kittens. She knows I love new kittens. I never could keep one alive. They always died of over-feeding. But at this precise moment, my dear child, Providence so arranged matters that you were driving by and I heard every word of my beloved sister-in-law's philippic about me. To resist such an opportunity —I think not indeed! Pity she fainted, but it won't hurt her; she's used to it. You got home all right? Of course you did, or you wouldn't be here."

"Oh yes, my Aunt!" Honor was still quivering with excitement and emotion. "Santo was frightened out of his wits, and drove fast, but terribly fast. We arrived in a cloud of dust. The butler runs out, the maid too, they

carry her in, they say all will be well, and I am to send the doctor, and I did so. Believe me, my Aunt, I did—what I could—"

Her voice trembled and broke, her eyes filled with tears. Mrs. Damian laid her hand on the child's arm with a tender, motherly touch—her nearest approach to a caress.

"My child, you did everything that was wise and kind and sweet. I am very proud of you, and perhaps—" with a whimsical glance at Miss Folly, who was looking rather graver than usual,—"I am a little ashamed of myself. But what would you? I am young, I must have emotions."

Her glance fell on Honor again, and softened into one of loving tenderness.

"And you stood up for me, you little thing! Did you really think those things about me that you said? You don't think I am an old snapping-turtle? Folly, will nothing induce you to give this child some tea? We shall have her fainting too, the first thing we know."

# CHAPTER XVI

### BRIG BEACH

Another picnic! a midday one this time. Pretty, dark-eyed Miss Vivian had invited Miss Folly and Honor to go with her and a party of friends to Brig Beach, some miles distant from Paget. Miss Vivian had taken a great fancy to Miss Folly; the two were about the same age and had many tastes in common. They were in a way to become fast friends. It might have been noted by an observant person that Mr. Hal Holiday also seemed much attracted by the clear-eyed, sedate young woman, and that he was to be found frequently in her neighborhood. It was a new idea to Honor that "old people" (i. e. people over twenty!) could make friends in this way. These two ladies seemed to enjoy each other's society in something the same way-"less

ardent, naturally; cooler, the heart cooling with age" (extract from Honor's journal!) than she enjoyed Nella's. Alas! Nella was not of the party. Miss Vivian had kindly invited her, learning from Miss Folly something of her loneliness; but the invitation had been declined by Sir Hubert Cranston in a brief note. He appreciated the courtesy, but regretted that his stepdaughter's health did not admit of her making social engagements. Honor, who had been raised to heights of rapture by hearing of the invitation, was now plunged in depths of despair. She would go, yes, since she was expected; but there would be no pleasure for her. Far rather would she stay at home and weep.

In this mood she took a subdued leave of her guardian, and she and Miss Folly started out on their bicycles.

It was one of the mornings that are marked in letters of gold, "Made in Bermuda." The air was living crystal; the roadside was hung with fragrant rainbow-hued jewels; sea and sky, hill and valley, leaf and blossom, all were in holiday mood; all except the cedars, which stood dark and somber, taking no account of the note of joy and life. It was as if they said: "Come and go, bloom and fade, shine and darken, it is all one to us. We stand here, faithful and silent, keeping watch over our Island."

Some such thought as this crossed Honor's mind as she rode along. She could confide in a cedar, she felt. She would like to throw her arms round one now, lean her head against the rough bark, and whisper how sad life was, how full of sorrow and disappointment the world which at times could look so bright. A cedar would keep counsel, she knew, would not betray her confidence to every wandering wind. It would be wonderful if she could write a poem about this. Nella wrote poems; she had shown her one, all about despair and death; it was very beautiful.

Honor began to string words together, half wondering at her power to do so.

"The world is very, very sad;
There was a time when it was glad,
When I was young and full of joy,
And fond of either girl or boy."

No! the last line would not do. It wasn't true, either, she had never—till now—known any boy, except Zitli; of course she was very fond of Zitli.

"When I was young and full of joy,
And had not learned to scorn a toy."

That was not good either; there were very few rhymes to "joy," thought Honor. "Annoy," "cloy"—she was not quite sure what the latter meant—and "ahoy!" which you said only at sea. Altogether, making a poem was not so easy as it seemed at first.

"Hi!" a shout behind them startled her out of her dream; she swerved, and almost ran into the bank, as Robin Holiday rode up to them, a knapsack on his back, a basket swinging from his handle-bar.

"Did I frighten you?" he asked. "Oh, I say! I'm frightfully sorry. I—oh! I say, good morning! good morning, Miss Folly. I'm always being a worm and forgetting to say the right things. But—Mum sent me forward to catch you up and say to wait by the old church for the rest of 'em. They'll be along soon. I say! isn't it a ripping morning? We're near the church now; see it peeking round the corner? Frightfully rum old place, but I like it, don't you?"

Whether "rum" or not, the old church was certainly picturesque. Built of coral rock grown gray with age, it stood in the center of a wide walled space of greensward, thickly dotted with tombs, these also of coral, white or gray. Here too, as everywhere, the sentinel cedars kept their faithful watch. Honor "came alive," as she would have expressed it.

"Oh!" she cried; and again, "oh! how it is

glorious! what beauty, what repose! not so, Miss Folly-dear? Tiens! Robin, what are those strange purple things? They resemble fruits, but to grow on such a bush-no! What can they be?"

"Prickly pears; kind of cactus, you know. They're fruit all right, but not specially—I say! look out!"

The word "fruit" was enough for Honor. She sprang forward and knelt beside the cactus, trying to break off one of the rich purple fig-like fruits; but the next moment recoiled with a cry. "Ah! it pricks me! my flesh is torn!"

"What did you expect?" asked Miss Folly. "Prickly pear: it is not a pear, but the rest of the name is strictly correct."

Honor, her wounded fingers in her mouth, turned wide reproachful eyes on the boy, who returned her glance with a sympathetic twinkle.

"Frightfully sorry!" he said. "I told you

to look out, you know, but you are so uncommon quick. Better pull 'em out, before they get in deep: the spines, I mean. Nasty things, if they work in."

Honor held out her hands with an eloquent gesture, and Miss Folly and Robin bent over them, carefully drawing out the slender, needle-pointed spines.

"Careful not to break 'em off!" said Robin cheerfully. "Work their way all round inside you, if you do. I fell into a bush last year—riding in the dark without my lantern, silly ass—and they're all round inside me still, jolly sickening when they wake up. Think they're all out now?"

Honor rubbed her fingers ruefully. "I—think so! in my knees, however, I feel pricking. That does not poison, no?"

"Not a bit; just pricks, you know. Probably your skirt is full of 'em; they'll work out in time. Here come the others! Now for the beach and a swim, what?"

The sandy path wound downward, past the picturesque ruin of a stone house, smothered in creepers, to where the clear green waters of the bay lay sparkling in the sun. The hither shore, where the merry-makers set down their baskets, was a sickle-shaped curve of cream-white sand. Opposite, the rocks, gray and frowning, all but closed in the circle, leaving a narrow entrance, a few yards across, about which the surf rose and fell in ceaseless play, while the water within was calm and still.

"You know," Robin confided to Honor, as they gather cedar-twigs for the fire, "this is simply the rippingest place for pirates on the island. For smuggling, of course, the Kaim is all right, and handy by, which makes all the difference; but for a night attack—cutlasses, and walking the plank, and all that—it isn't in it with this. You want a dark night, of course, and a desperate crew—."

"Lower away the cutter!" said a low, deep voice at his elbow.

Honor could hardly suppress a shrick; even Robin started violently, as he turned, to find his elder brother grinning cheerfully at him.

"I say!" he cried. "You got me that time, Hal! Lucky I didn't drop the kettle."

"You see, Miss Honor,"—Hal Holiday turned to Honor, his grin changing to a particularly cordial and pleasant smile—"I suppose boys have played pirate in this bay ever since there were any boys to play. Morgan was my part; my father preferred Blackbeard, my grandfather someone earlier still. I believe John Silver is your model, isn't he, young 'un?"

Robin owned to having played Silver more or less, when he could "round up a big enough gang." "Of course you have to have a good crowd for 'Treasure Island'; and of course everyone wants to be either Silver or Jim Hawkins, and no one wants to be Pew or Is-

rael Hands; so it takes some managing. But Hal," he added eagerly, "there have been real pirates here, too, shoals of 'em. Why, Grandpa's grandfather, you know——"

"Grandpa's grandfather," Hal interrupted gravely, but with a dancing gleam in his dark eyes, "owned the *Beautiful Polly*, and sailed her in these waters. She was a privateer, Miss Honor; a prettier word than pirate, though they both begin with 'p.' He may have had some fairly lively times making this harbor on a rough night; I've capsized once or twice myself, doing it. How about a swim, young 'un? Miss Honor, are you for a swim? There's just time before lunch."

Honor looked about her wide-eyed. She had brought her bathing dress, but there was no sign of a bath-house anywhere. At this moment Miss Vivian called to her. "Come, Honor! we are going in. Here is your bath-house, over here."

Wonder of wonders! a cave! a white-walled,

white-domed cave, reaching back and back into the coral rock; cool, shady, floored with creamy sand; a dressing room for Diana and her nymphs.

"The rock is honeycombed with these little caves," Miss Vivian explained. "The boys have theirs over yonder"—she nodded across the beach—"and these on this side are ours. You can play Thetis, or Calypso, or Circe, whichever you like, only be quick about it!"

The injunction was needed, for Honor was so enraptured with her cave that she might have lingered, fancying herself first one dark-tressed nymph, then another. The offending red hair snugly tucked under the blue rubber cap, why might she not forget its color for a moment? Thetis was the prettiest name, she thought; and besides, tinsel slippers!—there was that lovely line in Comus,

<sup>&</sup>quot;By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet"-

and—here the sound of splashing fell on her ear, and joyful outcries.

"Oh!" cried Honor. "I am coming! wait for me, Miss Folly-dear!"

Mrs. Holiday, sitting on the sand, feeding the fire with cedar twigs and driftwood, and watching the kettle as it began to sing, watched the bathers too, with tranquil enjoyment. Honor ought to make a good swimmer, she thought; she was so well-made, and moved so freely and gracefully. What a pretty creature! and a dear, good little girl; just the kind of girl her boys needed to "gentle" them a little. The older girl (meaning Miss Folly) was charming, too. It was quite evident that Hal thought so; well-why not? It was time he found his mate. What a superb swimmer he was! and the little fellows were taking after him. (What would Dirk Hatteraick have said to hear himself called a little fellow?)

Ah! what was that? A cry rang out

from the water; a startled cry, followed by a shriek of terror. Mrs. Holiday rose to her feet, and looked anxiously toward the bay.

Honor was enjoying herself, she was quite sure, as never in her life before. (She usually was! it was her favorite state of mind, with that of "dock dishpair" for a good second!) The wonderful, wonderful crystal water, bearing her up so lightly; the silver depths below, through which she saw the gleaming sand, with strange creatures lying or crawling on it. Oh, marvelous, fairylike! was she not really a nymph, a being born of water and sky—with tinsel slippers—and long dark tresses (under the cap!) and large dark mysterious eyes—

"Keep in the white water!" cried a voice. "Honor, keep in the white water, away from the weeds!"

Honor started, and looked down. Just before her was a broad belt of green, a tangle of water-grass or weeds, reaching up to the surface. She checked her stroke—just too late. Something shot out from the green tangle, something alive, smooth, horrible, a long writhing tentacle. Another instant, and it had seized her arm. Two hideous eyes glared at her——

"Hold up!" Hal Holiday was shooting through the water with long, powerful strokes; Robin was racing up on the other side. There was a smother of foam, a churning of the water, a furious struggle: the clammy hold loosened, dropped off. Honor felt herself lifted in strong arms—and felt nothing more.

"She is all right!"

Mrs. Holiday's sweet, cordial voice was the first sound that reached Honor's ears. "Just a little faint; you are all right now, dear, aren't you?"

"Thank the Lord!" said a deep voice. "Plucky little piece! never made a sound after the first scream!"

"She is plucky; a dear, brave child!"



"I SAY" WHISPERED ROBEN IT'S LIKE THE GOLDEN FLEECE."



That was Miss Folly's voice, surely? But how different from her usual tranquil tones; it was trembling, breaking, as if with emotion. And the other voice—the deep, musical one—that of Mr. Holiday, her preserver! ah!

Honor opened her eyes. She was lying on the sand beside the bright, crackling fire. They were all bending over her with varying degrees of anxiety in their kind faces.

"You are all right, aren't you?" repeated Mrs. Holiday, raising Honor's head on her arm. The blue cap had come off somehow, and the bright hair lay round her like a cloak.

"I say!" whispered Robin. "It's like the Golden Fleece, isn't it? Ripping color!"

"Oh—yes!" Honor was trying to collect her thoughts.

"What was it? Something dreadful came—ah!" she shivered, and clung to the kind, supporting arm.

"A squid; a cuttlefish! they are horrid things. That is why we always stay in the white water. Did none of you warn her?"

Mrs. Holiday looked mild reproach at the other Bermudians.

"They did!" cried Honor. "Robin did, and Miss Vivian. Only I—was so happy—I forgot, and did not see! Ah! that I was stupid. You forgive"—she addressed the elder Holiday shyly—"that I make you this trouble? I am so sorry!"

"My dear child! it is we who need forgiveness. We old hands should have kept near you; awfully sorry and ashamed for my part!"

"And now," said Mrs. Holiday, "if you will all go and dress, young people, we will have our luncheon. It is high time!"

## CHAPTER XVII

### DIPLOMACY

In these days, while Honor was playing and junketing with the delightful Island friends, Mrs. Damian was a busy woman. She kept her own counsel, saying nothing even to Miss Folly, save to fling out now and then a cryptic utterance more puzzling than silence. But there was cabling back and forth between Bermuda and London, between Bermuda and New York, and there were interviews—several of them—with Mr. Holiday, the father of Hal and the boys and the foremost lawyer of the Colony. One of these interviews took place on the day of the picnic at Brig Beach. At about the time when Honor was having her adventure with the cuttlefish, Mr. Holiday was

sitting in the pleasant Heathcote drawing-room, listening with keen attention to Mrs. Damian, who sat opposite him, knitting in hand.

"So you see," the lady was saying, "we need not be concerned for him. He has always been a rascal; and his sister, though conventionally respectable, is little better: degenerate scions of a good stock, you understand. The Cranstons were fine people in the time of James the Second, but they have been running down ever since, and now they are—what you see. You think the—what was your expression? the jig is up here, do you? Good expression! an apt piece of slang enriches the language; a poor one—in short, impoverishes it. You think the jig is up?"

"I do!"

Mr. Holiday spoke thoughtfully, turning over as he did so certain notes in his hand. "He has spent what money he had, and—as Mrs. Darrell's lawyer—I have refused to advance any more of hers. He has crippled

her income for several years as it is. I think"—cautiously—"I think I have convinced her of this. I had an interview with her yesterday—a distressing interview—and I think she finally saw the point, though she did not acknowledge it. May I ask if you have seen her lately, Mrs. Damian?" He looked up inquiringly.

Mrs. Damian shook her head.

"Won't see me! says she is dying, and I am her murderer. Poor Annabella! it really is a heavy blow; I am sorry for her. A fool can suffer as much as anybody else. It cannot be agreeable to be brayed in a mortar; the poor old goosey really believed in the man, and thought he was in love with her. I suppose he did mean to marry her?"

"If he could not get at her money without it—yes! When he found that he could not get it in any case, and that if he took another step he would be shown up, he—naturally, all things being considered—withdrew."

"Just so! did you see the letter he wrote her?"

Mr. Holiday shook his head.

"She sent me a copy," Mrs. Damian continued. "I am his murderer, as well as hers, it seems. Her happiness is the one thing in the world that he can consider; he finds himself so broken, in body and mind as well as heart, by the infernal machinations of scoundrels-that's you and me, you know-who seek to blast his fair fame and besmirch his stainless honor, that he can never be the same man again. The woman he adores shall not be tied to a wreck: he will drift away-his physician recommends a long sea voyage and Annabella will forget the man who has renounced all for her dear sake. A very clever letter!"

"Very!" Mr. Holiday assented. "Hubert was always clever—we were at school together in England, you know—and always, if you will pardon the expression, rotten. As you

more elegantly say, degenerate. The next question is—shall we let him go?"

Mrs. Damian rubbed her nose with her knitting-needle and considered. "I should prefer it, of course," she said at last—"if we can get hold of the little girl, and if—if we have the right to do it."

"If we are not condoning a felony, you mean. Well—in one sense, of course, we are. He ought to be behind the bars, no question of that: but—I don't find anyone who wants to put him there. People were fond of his wife; very sweet woman; he led her a dog's life, but she clung to him to the last. And then—well, you know what people are. He went about a great deal, played a good game of golf, gave a good dinner—a dashed agreeable fellow when he chose to be. Fact is, nobody wants to put him behind the bars. Bermuda people are—"

"The kindest people in the world!" Mrs. Damian nodded emphatically. "I know that.

Well, I don't want to put him behind the bars, either. I say, let him go—on his long seavoyage or elsewhere, provided we can get the child. You think we can be sure of that?"

This time it was Mr. Holiday who nodded with emphasis.

"You can get anything you want out of Hubert Cranston," he said, "for a round sum of money. As for the poor little girl, my private impression is that he desires nothing so much as to be rid of her. She is in his way; she reminds him of her mother, of whom he was really fond in his selfish way; she and Mrs. Champion don't get on together. Yes, he will be glad to be rid of her, but of course he will not admit it. His rôle will be the tender father from whom his adored child is to be ruthlessly torn away—"

"By a designing old witch! precisely. He will ask a good price?"

"I'm afraid so."

Here the talk became financial, and we may leave it.

That evening at bedtime Miss Folly as usual brought the "nightcap" of malted milk to Mrs. Damian's room, made sure that everything was tidy and comfortable, and was about to retire in her own quiet fashion, when the old lady stopped her.

"Sit down, Sphinx!" she said. "I have something to say to you. Sit down!"

Some people might have been alarmed at this, but Miss Folly sat down tranquilly, and, folding her capable hands in her lap, looked attentively at her employer.

"Don't speak to me!" said Mrs. Damian.

There was silence for several minutes, one lady rubbing her nose with her knitting-needle, the other considering her own carefully-kept finger-nails.

"I am going to buy that child!" said Mrs. Damian presently. Miss Folly looked up inquiringly, but said nothing.

"Don't be dense, Folly! What child should I be likely to buy? Nella Castiglione, of course. I am going to buy her. Now you may speak!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Damian! I am very glad. Are you going to buy her for yourself, or for Honor?"

"You speak as if she were a jointed doll. For Honor, of course; I don't really need another doll—child, I mean. For Honor, and for herself."

Miss Folly gave her a lovely look, in which affection spoke more eloquently than words.

"Nothing of the kind!" the old lady spoke sharply. "If you look at me like that, Martha Folly, I shall throw the tongs at you. The affair is perfectly simple; at least—well, as a matter of fact it isn't simple at all," she added ruefully. "Listen! Here is little Honor in desperate need of a companion of her own age; a girl-companion; in short, a mate. If I—or you either—had had a glimmering of

sense, we should have realized this at first. Perhaps you did realize it!" She looked sharply at Miss Folly, who smiled slightly in spite of herself.

"Humph! and your excellent manners forbade you to mention it. Your excellent manners will drive me to dri—to distraction some day, Folly. Well! so down we come here, and on the way the child-bless her little sentimental heart! finds her mate, falls in love with her, swears eternal friendship—on a pink sugar heart! I was a bat not to realize then what was happening! She finds her lonely, unhappy—never shall I forget that child's face the first time she came here: tragic!—and proceeds to—to pour herself out, as if from a pitcher! Naturally she does not confide in bats or owls—naturally! I should have done the same in her place. Fortunately-most fortunately—she finds these nice manly boys -dear me! I wish I could buy Dirk Hatteraick too!—and their heavenly mother—I

love that girl!—so everything comes out right, and all is gas and gaiters, as the Old Gentleman in gray smallclothes says. If you didn't know your Dickens, Folly, I should sell you to the rag-and-bottle man. Yes!—well! so that is Honor's position. Now-my dear! take the other child. Her parents dead, her stepfather a heartless ne'er-do-well, and a brute besides, I fear. His sister—you have seen her! The child is—I should suppose—an utter nuisance to them, but they want her money. Their plan, as I understand, is to shut her up in a convent—not exactly Trappist, but as near it as Anglicans can come—and then spend her income for her. They rather count, I should suppose—perhaps unconsciously—upon her dying or going mad before she comes of age, as no doubt she would, if left to their tender mercies. Now, Sphinx, here is where I come in. I happen to know that the man is short of money; that he needs it desperately. Why, if you will believe me, he

has even been making love to that poor goosey, Annabella Darrell; actually proposing marriage to her, in the hope of getting her fortune, which is very comfortable. That gun is spiked, I am thankful to say. Sir Hubert Cranston will shortly find himself in difficulties; very serious difficulties. He will, I rather fancy"-Mrs. Damian spoke with great enjoyment—"find himself trapped, like the rat he is. Then—I step in; through my man of business, you understand; I have no desire to see the man; and offer to take the girl off his hands—for a consideration. He will play the injured parent for all it is worth, but he has to have money, I happen to know that. In the end he will give in, take the money, and —I hope and believe—take himself off. Nobody in Bermuda will try to stop him. We have the child—a nice, well-mannered, poor little thing—and Honor has her soul's sister and all that. My dear! I had one at her age, and she ran away—she was older than I—with a Polish fiddler. It nearly broke my heart; he broke hers—ah! dear me! poor thing! Well! this child has a little look of her, I do believe; just a turn of the head, nothing tangible. Well! dear me Sirs! a year ago I made a will, leaving all my Professor's money and my own to the Simpkinsian, and here I am setting up an orphan asylum. I believe it is your fault, though I am not quite sure how. Well! Is this all clear? Have I dropped a stitch anywhere?"

Miss Folly reflected.

"I don't think so, Mrs. Damian!" she said presently. "It seems perfectly clear, and perfectly logical. May I add, very like yourself, dear friend?"

"No!" shortly, "you may not. You may take this tray, and take yourself off. Just one thing more!"

The old lady's voice took on an incisive ring, and she fixed her keen dark eyes on her companion. "If that long Holiday fellow has serious designs upon you, as I shrewdly suspect; and if—I merely say if—you should think as well of him as I do—I don't mean that I want to marry him, though really, after Annabella, I don't know why not—well! if, and if,—why there will be two people to take care of me, you ridiculous girl, and the Slave of Duty need have no scruples—there! there! my dear! don't burn entirely up, like—who was it? Semele? I am not Jupiter!"

Miss Folly was blushing as deeply as even Honor could. Her eyes were brimming with tears. She stood still at the door, and kissed her hand to Mrs. Damian.

"Go to bed!" said that lady hastily. "For goodness' sake go to bed, Folly, and leave me in peace. God bless you, my dear!"

As Miss Folly passed Honor's room, she saw a light under the door, and paused a moment. It was time the child was asleep. Should she go in and put out the light? She stood still a moment, then passed on. "I cannot!" said the Slave of Duty. "I cannot do it. She must take care of herself, this once!" And she passed on to her own room.

If she had entered, she would have found Honor sitting up in bed, with bright eyes and flushed cheeks, writing in her journal.

"Life is changed!" she wrote. "The world is different from this morning, wholly, wonderfully different. I have looked in the face of death—ah! terrible, hideous death! I have felt—but no! I cannot write of that. Another moment, and I should have been dragged under, in that frightful green tangle. Then, at the instant, he came, my preserver! like an arrow he shot through the water—he looked just like Perseus, I am sure he did, and I should have felt like Andromeda if there had been time, but there wasn't. There was a terrible struggle; the waves surged up around me; the horrible, horrible clutch on my arm relaxed, dropped off. I felt myself lifted in strong, tender arms—and knew no more.

"Ah! my preserver! how can I repay thee? What can a simple girl do to show her gratitude, deep as life itself? What can I do? It shall be my one thought, my one study, as long as I live, to do something for him, to show him that the devotion of a true heart may have some slight value, even for one so glorious as him—I mean—" Honor paused a moment—"as he. Enough! be still, sad heart! Midnight tolls—at least I am sure it must be very late. Sleep, my preserver! sleep in noble peace. I shall find a way!"

## CHAPTER XVIII

## THE CRISIS

Twilight was falling; the soft Bermuda twilight, delicate veil on veil of airy amethyst. They had had tea on the veranda, and now Mrs. Damian was taking a nap, Miss Folly a walk, and Honor was swinging in the hammock under the great casuarina tree, listening to the musical chirp of the tree-toads, and thinking over the wonderful day she had had. He (there was but one he in Honor's world at present; she had forgotten, or had not noticed, on the day of the rescue, that Robin had reached the spot almost as soon as his brother, and had been no less ardent than he in doing battle with the "dread monster of the deep"!) had taken them all, herself, Miss Folly, and the boys, to see the Crystal

For an hour they had been in fairyland; a fairyland glittering with diamonds, glowing with pearl, jasper, alabaster, radiating all the colors of the rainbow as the electric lights played here and there, pulsating among the forest of stalactites. There was no language, Honor thought, which could in any way describe the splendors she had seen. She longed to show them to Nella-poor little Nella, shut up in her hotel room, barred by a brutal Ogre from the pleasures which were her right. Ah! for example! if he, the Ogre, could be taken out, plunged in that green tangle, be caught by those white, hideous tentacles-Honor shuddered, and returned in thought to the Caves. He-her preserverhad sent her and the boys forward with the guide, and had lingered behind with Miss Folly. To guard the rear! how noble of him! and how kind, to talk to Miss Folly-dear, who, naturally, led an unexciting life. At that age —not of course great age, like her aunt—in278

deed strong and active, retaining quite wonderfully the powers of youth, but—naturally -seeing life in colors sober, a little triste. But how good, how kind, always to appear interested in all that interested youth! The one drawback of the great day had been that she, Honor, had hardly done more than exchange greetings with Him. His few words, it is true, had been full of thought for her.

"You are quite well, Miss Honor? I trust you felt no after effects from the fright? Good! you were very plucky."

How heartily he said "Good!" How deep and rich the tone of his voice, full of cordial kindness and—yes! feeling! she was sure that there was a special depth of feeling in his tone when he addressed her. He had been laughing gayly with Miss Folly-dear; turning to her, his noble face became grave. Ah! life was real, life was earnest. To a deep nature, such as his—how very loud that tree-toad was singing!

Honor sat upright and listened intently.

"Peep! peep! pe-eep!" The note was not only loud and clear, but insistent; she suddenly became aware that it had been repeated a number of times. A signal!

With cautious steps she advanced toward the wall, keeping under the shadow of the tree.

"Donner!" said a low voice.

"Blitzen!" replied Honor. "What is it, Dirk—I mean Rob?"

She corrected herself hastily, seeing that Robin Holiday was not alone. He held by the collar a small negro boy, who was trembling partly with fear, partly with excitement.

"I found this"—Robin gave the child a friendly shake—"prowling about here, looking for you; at least he said 'the lady with hair on fire,' so—well, I brought him along. He has something for you, he says; won't give it to me. Darned cheeky, if you ask me."

<sup>&</sup>quot;What is it?"

Honor leaned eagerly over the wall.

"Oh, what is it? Who sent you?"

The little boy held up a small white object which glimmered in the twilight.

"Dat young lady at de hotel send me!" he said in a loud whisper. "She come out on de balc'ny and bicken me; I was goin' indo's to Mammy; she cook dere, Mammy do. First she say 'Hesh!' and look all roun' her kin' o' scairt; 'n' den she say 'Hol' you two han's togedder an' catch!' she say; an' she drap dis into me han's, yes, Missy; 'n' den she say 'You cut up to Heathcote and gib dat to de young lady what has hair like fire, or sunset; 'n' tell her'-den she jump like she hear somep'n, and wave her han' like and run in, 'n' I come up here, yes, Missy, fas's I could lope."

Honor leaned still farther over the wall, and took the object the child held up. It was a heart-shaped white pebble, with the words "Quand Même" written on it.

"Oh!" she cried, "oh, Robin! it is the token; the signal. Nella is in trouble; she sends for me; I fly!"

Her hands were on the coping of the wall, ready for a spring; but she checked herself.

"My aunt!" she said. "I promised; she must know all. Wait but a moment, Robin, that I fly to her. Ah! catastrophe! she sleeps, and must not be disturbed at this hour. Miss Folly, then! I fly——"

"Hold on!" Robin Holiday spoke low and earnestly.

"Sturm wetter, Honor! you couldn't go down there now without being spotted by your hair, you may lay to that." (Master Holiday relapsed from the language of Dirk Hatteraick to that of John Silver, familiar to him at an earlier age.)

Honor clasped her hands in despair. "What then to do? She may be in danger, Robin. At this moment he may be bruising her flesh; he has done it, she told me. He has

beaten her with a strap; it is too frightful.

At least I can run to find Miss Folly. She went to walk on the beach. In five minutes
—in three——"

"I met her, walking with Hal!" said Robin Holiday briefly. "They're miles off by this time. But listen, Honor! I have a hunch. Lend me your bicycle! I'll nip down there with it, see? Riding my own, of course watch my chance, whistle her out with the 'Roast Beef', and fetch her up here. It'll be easy as lying. He—the worm—is over at Hamilton now; I met him as I was coming back from the Library, all togged up—there's a big reception, I know, at the Queen's Hotel; he's safe to be there till nine or ten o'clock. I'll show her the talisman, see? case she should have forgotten me, but she won't—and I'll bring her up. And you," he added swiftly, "go and clear out the chaps from the Kaimthey are in there making grog for to-night tell 'em the lay is off, and to scuttle to their forms. They know what that means. Then—you might get a blanket and pillow and things, and make all snug against we come, and then, when Mrs. Damian wakes up, you can—you can tell her what we've done, of course!" he concluded rather lamely.

"You mean—that we hide her? That we conceal Nella in the Kaim?"

"Of course! best place in the world. He'll never think of looking for her there. He's leaving, anyhow, sailing on the *Typhoon*, I heard Dad say so. It would be a good wind for all parties, he said to Mum. I say!"

Robin's face clouded, and he kicked the gravel about, a sign of disturbance with him. "I shall have to tell Mum—or Hal!" he said. "I promised I would."

"Of course! oh, of course!" cried Honor eagerly. "I also my guardian, assuredly. Only—at this instant——"

"Oh, I'll go ahead, of course; I know it's all right; they would say, 'Go to it!' I know

they would; so I'll tell 'em by-and-by that I went to it, and they'll say 'Good for you'! you see?"

"I see! he is—they are so wonderful, they will understand all. Fly then, Robin! On the instant! ride as if the wolves of Apennine were all upon thy track! and—tiens! we forget this nice little boy, who brought the talisman. Wait! but wait! I have sixpence, but they are in my room. I fly——"

"He's all right!" Robin spoke with friendly gruffness, giving a little shake to the child, whom he still held by the collar.

"It's all nuts to you, isn't it, Miguel? He shall ride your wheel down, and I'll give him sixpence if he keeps right side up, and a jolly good hiding if he capsizes. See that, Mig?"

Miguel nodded with sparkling eyes. He had no wheel of his own.

Honor watched them ride down the hill and out of sight round the bend, then sought the Kaim of Derncleugh.

The smuggler band were deep in the preparation of grog, stirring pineapple juice from a bottle and sugar from a whitey-brown paper screw into a dingy fluid which they pronounced prime laurel tea. When told that the Lay was off for the night they were at first cast down, but were revived at the news that a serious venture was on hand.

"I say!" muttered Billy Blessington, to whom, as second in command, Honor had whispered a word under seal of secrecy.

"Kidnapping! that is serious! I'm fly; but keep it dark from the chaps, you understand. Good chaps, but young."

"And—" Honor sought in her memory for the proper phrase: "You are to—Dirk said —coalscuttle to—to what? Your figures, yes?"

Billy Blessington stared blankly at her for an instant; then—being a singularly polite boy—was seized with a violent fit of coughing.

"Ha! ha! I mean—how! how! of course.

Scuttle to our forms, wasn't it? We will! I say, though! won't you have a tot before we go? Grog, you know; we say a tot. Glossin, bring a pannikin!"

Honor hastily declined the tot, with thanks; declined also the offers of assistance which the Band ardently pressed upon her. Finally they departed, with many a backward, wistful glance. It seemed hard that they might not stay when—evidently—something Big was on hand. They privately thought it a mistake to bring girls into these affairs, even such a ripping girl as Honor Bright; but they were well trained, and their leader's will was law.

Left alone, Honor went swiftly and silently about her preparations for the reception of the beloved fugitive. She brought her own traveling pillow, the pretty blue silk one that her dear Ladies had sent her for the voyage (that expected voyage to America on which they had speculated so much!), her steamer rug, her camel's hair wrapper, her soft shoes,

her very prettiest nightgown. Naturally, la pauvrette would not be able to bring anything with her, unless a toothbrush. Brush and comb, then! her beautiful ivory set; how fortunate that for sentiment she had preserved the old wooden-backed brush, the hard rubber comb, which she had used at the Pension! these would do perfectly for herself. What else? A mirror! ah! at the instant even! her own mirror! she could use Miss Folly-dear's.

She had made three trips to and from the house; this, for the mirror was the fourth. As she returned, breathless and panting, the mirror in her arms, she almost ran into Miss Folly and Hal Holiday, who were sauntering leisurely across the lawn. Miss Folly's eyes were as bright as Honor's own, full of happy light; her cheeks were a soft rose that was singularly becoming. She was quite lovely, Honor thought with a sudden shock of wonder.

"Honor my dear, where are you going? What are you doing with that mirror?" Honor struggled for breath, her cheeks were aflame, her eyes ablaze.

"Miss Folly-dear!" she gasped. "Not now! I implore you, not now! when my guardian wakes she shall know all, all, I swear it to you. Now—ah! par example! I must go! It is the crisis!"

She vanished inside the green door; Miss Folly gazed after her in amazement.

"The crisis!" she repeated. "What can the child be about?"

"Another crisis?" There was a tremble in Hal Holiday's deep, musical voice; a happy tremble. He slipped his arm round Miss Folly's waist. "Another crisis, Martha? If only it is as fortunate as ours, my dear!"

"Who is that at the gate?" asked Mrs. Damian.

The old lady had had a comfortable nap, and was now ready for the pleasant evening meal, high tea or supper, which she always enjoyed. She was sitting by the window, watching for the slow, lovely coming on of evening; Miss Folly moved quietly about the room, straightening and tidying in her methodical fashion.

"At the gate, Mrs. Damian? Shall I go and see?"

"No! stop where you are! don't come here!"
Mrs. Damian spoke sharply, her keen eyes
fixed on some distant point. "Sit down,
Folly, and don't speak to me."

There was a silence of some duration; long enough for two young creatures to slip quietly through the gate and across the lawn, and vanish round the corner of the house.

Mrs. Damian turned to her companion.

"My eyes are growing dim!" she said; "the light is fading, too, of course. Impossible for me to distinguish figures."

At her complacent tone, Miss Folly looked at her, but said nothing. Mrs. Damian's eyesight was remarkably keen, as they both knew. "Now, Folly, listen to me!" There was another pause, during which the telephone rang in the hall.

"Answer that, will you? and then come back to me!"

Miss Folly departed, and Mrs. Damian sat listening, looking like a very wise and highbred hawk in velvet plumage.

"This is Heathcote, yes. Mrs. Damian's companion is speaking. Mrs. Damian does not come to the telephone. I will take any message. Miss Castiglione? No, she is not here. No, we have not seen her at all to-day. I beg your pardon? Come up here? If you choose; I doubt if you could see Mrs. Damian, but I will answer any question you may wish to—good-by!"

She re-entered the room with somewhat heightened color.

"Well?" the hawk spoke abruptly.

"Sir Hubert Cranston!" replied Miss Folly. "Nella is missing, and he thinks she is here.

He is coming up here to search the premises. You will not see him, Mrs. Damian?"

"Yes, I will see him," Mrs. Damian spoke slowly and deliberately. "I shall be—for once—glad to see him, after he has searched the premises. You shall take him round the premises, Folly. Take him through the house if he wishes it; lift up the table-cloths, and move out the sofas. But first telephone to Mr. Holiday, and ask him to come up as soon as convenient, and bring a couple of officers with him. What is it?"

"His—his son is here now!" said Martha Folly in a low voice. "I am sure—he would be glad to help in any way."

"Tell him to stand by!" Mrs. Damian's voice expressed satisfaction, but no surprise. "Not probable that he will be needed, but you never can tell. Tell him to stand by; and—give him my blessing!"

"He—he wondered if you could see him for a few minutes!" Miss Folly spoke timidly, a note of hesitation in her usually tranquil, measured voice.

"To-morrow! or—perhaps later to-night; not just now. I must think a little. Give him my blessing—he will understand, if you don't, and—what is it, Honor?"

Honor stood in the doorway, glowing like a torch, her arms outstretched, her eyes fixed imploringly on her guardian.

"Put up the firescreen, Folly!" said Mrs. Damian. "The child is incandescent, dangerous. What is it, Honor?"

Honor dropped to her knees, her arms still outstretched.

"My Aunt!" she said in a low voice. "I come to confess. You were asleep; I dared not wake you. I—we, Robin and I—have taken——"

"The silver spoons?" Mrs. Damian swooped hawklike. "I can't hear about it to-night. I am busy—tired! do you hear? Get up, child, and leave your heroics! We'll



"HONOR DROPPED TO HER KNEES, HER ARMS STILL OUT-STRETCHED."



things as they are! do you understand? As they are! Hand me Pascal, will you, Folly? I want to compose my mind. You may tell Folly anything you like, Honor; she'll see you through. Stop!" as Honor, bewildered and disappointed, turned away. "My dear! Is there a bolt on the inside of the green door? There used to be in my time—good! always have a bolt on the inside of a green door; not so necessary in a blue one. Go now, child!"

"I am positive that she is here!"

Sir Hubert Cranston spoke in a high, angry tone, very different from the smooth silken one he generally used in company. "The hotel has been searched thoroughly, and she is nowhere to be found. I am positive that she is concealed somewhere on these premises. I am her legal guardian, and I demand the right of search. Defy me at your peril!"

"We have no intention of defying you, sir!" said Miss Folly quietly. "On the contrary, we shall be glad to aid you in any reasonable degree. I will take you through the house and garden myself."

"I'll come along if I may!" said another voice, at which the man started and peered into the shadows.

"Good evening, Sir Hubert Cranston," said Hal Holiday easily, as he strolled up and stood at Miss Folly's side, very tall and stalwart. "May I come along, Miss Folly? I know the place so well—my father is the agent, you know—perhaps I might help a little. Shall we begin with the kitchen?"

Sir Hubert Cranston's tone changed to a conciliatory one, and he laughed, an uneasy laugh. "I may seem unreasonable!" he said. "Absurd, possibly! But you see, the child is so delicate, the night air is fatal to her; and we sail in the morning. Absolutely imperative to find her; and—er—Mrs. Damian has

been so kind—it seemed probable that—"

"Just so! here is the kitchen. This is the copper, where the clothes are boiled. This is the oven—like to get in? Curious things, these big ovens; doesn't seem to be anyone there. This is the wood-cupboard; she might be in here."

All was still in the Kaim of Derncleugh, still as death. In the inner compartment, on a cedar couch, lay Nella Castiglione, white and exhausted. Her breath came in long broken sighs, but otherwise she made no sound, only trembled so that the boughs beneath her shook and rustled. In the outer compartment, Robin and Honor knelt side by side close to the door. The boy clutched a rusty cutlass, the girl held a glittering breadknife. The door, a stout one, was bolted on the inside, but the desperate pair were taking no chances. With set lips and bent brows, every sense on the alert, they listened.

Hark! voices outside; coming nearer and nearer.

"The hour is come, and the man!"
Honor's whisper was faint and tremulous.

"Cut ben whids!" was the reply, hardly audible.

"What is this door?" asked a voice, at sound of which the girl inside uttered a faint moan. "What is in here?"

"The base of the chimney!"

At the answering voice Robin Holiday relaxed his tense attitude, and permitted himself a soundless chuckle.

"Brick stack, you know; usually walled in, in these old houses. Probably some extra wood piled round it. Doubt if you could get in"—a hand shook the door negligently.

"Fastened, you see. Here's the toolhouse across here; like to go in?"

The voices died away. Honor's hand in the darkness groped for Robin's, found and clutched it.

"Safe!" she whispered. "She is safe. Oh, Dirk! Robin! it was he—my preserver!"

"Hm! I say!" Robin's responding whisper was hasty and agitated.

"No blubbing, you know. Stow all that! It was only Hal. Of course he would pull it off; he always does."

## CHAPTER XIX

## FINALE

"Good evening, Sir Hubert Cranston! have you found your stepdaughter?"

Mrs. Damian was an imposing figure, slight and erect in her sweeping velvet draperies. Her hawk-eyes shone as she fixed them on the angry man before her. Behind him, Hal Holiday stood easily leaning against the doorjamb, but made no motion to enter.

"I have not found her, Madam! but I am still convinced that members of your household have had a hand in her disappearance, and I demand her at your hands."

"You did not search my bedroom," said Mrs. Damian thoughtfully; "that was nice of you; to be sure you didn't know where it was. Perhaps you will take my assurance that she is not there." "I shall be happy to do so!" Sir Hubert bowed stiffly. "I decline, however, to——"

"Nor in any room on this floor!" Mrs. Damian went on smoothly. "There is no upper story, as you perceive, and no cellar. The lack of cellars in Bermuda houses has always seemed to me a drawback. So many things one wants to keep in the cellar, you know—or the attic! yes, a distinct lack; though the architecture is so charming, don't you think? Pray be seated, Sir Hubert Cranston. You must be fatigued after your—a—exertions."

Mrs. Damian deliberately drew out a tortoise-shell lorgnette ("My dear! I keep it by me, and use it when I want to be odious!") and surveyed her visitor through it. A good-looking man! she thought. A distinguished-looking man, if it were not for those bad lines

about the mouth. The eyes were bad, too.

"I thank you, Madam; I prefer to stand."

Yes! a handsome scoundrel.

"I repeat,"—Sir Hubert's voice took on a rasping edge, and his eyes glittered ominously—"I repeat, Mrs. Damian, that I decline to accept your assurance that my daughter is not concealed somewhere on these premises."

"In my bedroom!" the lady corrected him.
"I said she was not in my bedroom. I gave
you no other assurance. I thought you had
looked everywhere else yourself. And she
isn't your daughter, you know."

The man's hands clenched and unclenched themselves nervously; he was evidently on the verge of an outbreak and struggling for self-control. It must be admitted that Mrs. Damian's tone of cool defiance was exasperating.

"Madam," he stammered in a voice halfstifled by rage. "What am I to understand by this? You do not deny—you do not attempt to deny—that you, or your—accomplices"—with an angry glance at the young man—"have kidnapped the girl? I insist on her being produced this instant!" "What do you want of her?" Mrs. Damian leaned swiftly forward, her attitude of dignified ease changing in a moment to one of keen inquiry. "What do you want of her, and what will you take for her?"

Seeing the other struck mute, as it were, by this sudden attack, she went on, still with swift, incisive utterance.

"You do not want the girl, Hubert Cranston. She is in your way at every step; your one desire is to get hold of her money, and to get rid of her. Don't explode! I am a woman of business, and I speak in the way of business. Now! I do want the girl—no matter why—and I have no need of her money. I don't propose to give you that, but I am prepared to take the child off your hands, and to give you a lump sum in return. Don't answer at once; take a moment to think it over. You'd really better sit down! Hal! is your father in the morning room?"

"Here, Mrs. Damian!" said a new voice. Mr. Holiday senior stood in the doorway, shoulder to shoulder with his son. They were about the same height, and presented a formidable barrier.

"Good evening, Hubert!" he said pleasantly. "I fear I have startled you."

At the sound of his voice, Sir Hubert Cranston had gone the color of gray ashes. He turned, and stood glaring at father and son, like a particularly ill-natured wolf at bay.

"You!" he said. "What—what have you to do with this, Holiday? It—it is a private matter."

"The game is up, Hubert!" said Mr. Holiday easily. "Better take it quietly; no sense in making a fuss." And as the other still glared speechless, he added, "I have a couple of officers outside, but I hope we shall not need them. You see, there are warrants out against you here and in London; dear me! of course

you know that. Of course that is why you are expecting to sail to-morrow on the Typhoon."

Cranston shot a furious look at him, and took a step forward. The younger Holiday moved as if to intercept him, but his father held him back.

"Best thing you can do; there was no need to take your passage in an assumed name. No one here wants to stop you. You'd much better sit down, as Mrs. Damian kindly suggests."

Advancing into the room, he took a seat himself; Cranston, after a moment's hesitation, followed his example.

"Mrs. Damian"—the lawyer bowed to the lady, who returned his salutation with a benignant glance—"has been everything that is kind and considerate in this matter. For the sake of—er—various persons and things, she desires the affair kept as private as pos-

sible. No names need occur, save that of your stepdaughter, Miss Castiglione. In consideration of—" he drew a paper from his pocket and handed it to Sir Hubert Cranston—"of the sum mentioned in this document, which I am empowered to pay, you relinquish all claim to authority over Miss Castiglione and her property. You undertake, on oath, never to approach her again in any way. Here is a pen; suppose you sign now, and have the matter settled."

"And if I refuse?" The man was making an effort to master himself, though his voice still shook with rage, and his eyes still glared wolfish. "If I refuse to join this precious conspiracy?"

Mr. Holiday shrugged his shoulders.

"The officers are outside," he reminded him. "They have a couple of warrants, which they have orders to serve if you refuse. I really don't advise you to, Hubert. Better sign! Here's the pen!"

"Open the windows, Folly!" commanded Mrs. Damian. "That man had patchouli on his handkerchief; the room reeks with it. Pah! So that is over, and well over. That's a nice lad of yours; very like his father, who is one of the nicest men I have ever known. I wish you joy, my dear; I don't know that I have mentioned it before, but I am extremely pleased with the match. And now," she added in a different tone, "do for charity's sake go and bring those unhappy children out of Poky Hole, where they must be halfstifled by this time. Here! I'll make you an engagement present; you shall have the fun of telling them about it all. Don't speak to me! I am going to bed."

"It is late, late! the clocks are chiming midnight"—Honor looked up, and seeing that it was only a quarter past ten, ran her pen through the last phrase—"but I cannot sleep till I have written a few burning lines, poured out a few drops at least of the emotion that drowns my heart. Oh, how strange life is! how unutterably strange! a few hours, and all changed, all bouleversed—no! capsized—" she looked at the last word a while, and then crossed it out-"altered; that is it. An altered world, a changed life. I, who was so alone, whose soul cried out for companionship, have found a sister. Nella is my own, own sister, in the bond of the heart, which alone counts. My guardian—so wonderful, so good, so-astonishing, in her age as of monuments, with a heart as of tender youth has bought Nella from that hateful Ogre. He has signed papers; he has given her up; he has departed. To-morrow he sails away, and we shall never see his horrid cruel face again. Is she happy, my Nella? Perhaps not yet; she is overwhelmed, pauvrette! she weeps, she knows not why. She returns my caresses, but timidly, so all unused to tenderness, to the passionate devotion of a loving heart. But she will be happy; it shall be my one study—saving my duty to my so-admirable and wonderful guardian—to make her so.

"So many different emotions crowd my heart, it is as if to suffocate. He—my preserver—is to wed Miss Folly! Apparently my guardian is satisfied; they are happy; the world is bright for them. Strange! of ripe age, they are yet full of romance. His eyes, when he looks at her, are glowing lamps, and hers like blue stars. Ah! love, romantic love, must be very wonderful. I had thought some day I might be his page, to follow, to serve him, unrecognized, unknown, till some day the dagger meant for him should pierce my faithful breast. Then, supported in his arms, I would look up-my last look, and murmur with my dying breath-'My preserver, thus I requite the debt. Farewell!' Now, this will never be. My life will be spent in the care of my guardian, and of Nella, the sister of my heart. To bring smiles to their faces, light

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to their eyes; a life of devotion! in this also is beauty, is happiness in the end. Life—I record it as my last thought before laying my head on my pillow, to rest if not to sleep—life is mysterious!"

THE END

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